THE ISLAND OF APPLEDORE



ADAIR ALDON



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The boy had learned much of odd-sounding names and strange sea terms.

THE ISLAND OF APPLEDORE

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
By W. B. KING

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FOREWORD

Any one who knows the coast of New England will know also the Island of Appledore and just where it lies. Such a person can tell you that it is not exactly the place described in this book, that it is small and bare and rocky with no woods, no meadows, no church, or mill, or mill-creek road. Perhaps all that the story tells of it that is true is that there the rocks give forth their strange deep song, "the calling of Appledore," as warning of a storm, that there the poppies bloom as nowhere else in the world, that there the surf comes rolling in, day in and day out, the whole year through, and that there one's memory turns back with longing, no matter how many years of absence have gone by.

There, also, you can sit for hours to watch the huge, green breakers come foaming and tumbling in endless procession up the stony beach; you can watch the nimble sandpipers and the tireless, wheeling gulls; and if you

choose you can spin for yourself just such a story as this one of Billy Wentworth and Captain Saulsby and Sally Shute, a tale of mysteries and perils and midnight adventures on the shores of Appledore.

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THE ISLAND OF APPLEDORE

CHAPTER I

PEERING EYES

Two big willow-trees guarded the entrance to Captain Saulsby's place, willow-trees with such huge, rough trunks and such thick, gnarled branches that they might almost have been oaks. For fifty years they had bent and rocked before the furious winter storms, had bowed their heads to the showers of salt spray and had trembled under the shock of the thundering surf that often broke on the rocks below them. They had seen tempests and wrecks and thrilling rescues upon that stretch of sea across which they had looked so long, they had battled with winds that had been too much for more than one of the ships flying for shelter to the harbour of Appledore. It was no wonder that they showed the stress of time.

Billy Wentworth stood hesitating at the gap in the wall, looked up at the swaying, pale-green branches above him and down at the green and white surf rolling in on the shore below, sniffed at the keen salt breeze and tried to tell himself that he did not like it. He was so thoroughly angry and discontented that he could see nothing pleasant in the sunny stretch of open water, the glitter of the tossing whitecaps and the line of breaking waves about the lighthouse a mile away.

"To spend the summer on a little two-by-four island with an old-maid aunt," was his bitter reflection, "to have nothing on earth to do and no one to do it with—it's just too hard. I won't stand it long."

He stumped the toes of his boots in the dust of the narrow path with as much obstinate sulkiness as though he were six years old instead of sixteen. Perhaps it made him even more angry than he was before, to discover that, in spite of what he had been thinking, he had stood staring for some minutes at the big, curling waves as they rolled in, receded, and came foaming up among the rocks again. Indeed he had been watching with such fascination that he could scarcely tear his eyes

away. He had seen the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in his life only a few hours ago, and he was still trying, with some success, to convince himself that he did not like it and never would.

He strolled aimlessly along the path which he had been told led to "Cap'n Saulsby's little house down on the point." There was a vague desire in his mind to look upon a live sea-captain since he had never seen one before. The feeling was not strong, only just enough to bring him along the shore road and through the willow-guarded gateway. He had no thought, as he walked slowly between the two big trees, that they marked the door to a new phase in his life, that they were to prove the entrance to adventures and perils of an unknown kind. He merely trudged along, frowning at the sun that shone too brightly on the dazzling blue water and at the wind that blew too sharply in his face.

Somebody was walking up the path before him; so he slackened his pace a little, having no wish to overtake him. As far as he could judge it was a boy of about twenty-one or so, very fair-haired, with broad shoulders and well-shaped hands hanging from sleeves a

trifle too short. He carried a bag of tools and was whistling gaily some intricate tune of trills and runs as he walked along. As he turned to look out to sea, Billy saw that he had a pleasant face, cheerful, intelligent and rather sensitive. He stood for a minute, though without seeing Billy, then walked on again, swinging his bag and piping his music in the very best of spirits.

A bobolink was swinging on the branch of a bush that leaned over the wall. The gay black-and-white fellow was a new bird to Billy, so he stopped to look at it more closely. Certainly it was the bird that caught his attention not the unaccountable rustle that he heard immediately after, for that sound he might never have noticed save for the strange thing that followed.

For the rustle was repeated; then a hand rose over the wall, slipped across one of the big lichen-covered rocks and rapped upon it sharply with something metallic. The boy ahead of him stopped dead, hesitated a second, then turned slowly toward the sound. Billy could see now that there was a man there behind the wall, crouching among the bushes, some one rather small, narrow-shoul-

dered and with stiff black hair. He seemed to be peering intently at the boy on the path but did not move or speak. The boy, also, said nothing but presently went upon his way again, swinging his bag and once more trying to whistle. But such a trembling, broken tune as came forth in place of the former cheerful music! The lad looked back once, but was gazing so eagerly at the wall that he did not notice Billy at all. He showed a face turned suddenly gray-white with terror, drawn, haggard and anxious. It was plainly visible that his knees shook under him as he tried to stride onward at his former gait, and that it was because of the trembling of his hands that his bag of tools dropped twice upon the grass.

What could have been in that man's face that had alarmed him so? The boy looked like a vigorous, spirited sort of person, Billy thought, one that it might be nice to know and be friends with, not a coward. The mild interest that had brought him through the gate now gave place to extreme curiosity as he hurried up the path.

Around the curve of a low knoll Captain Saulsby's house came into view. It was an

oddly-shaped little dwelling, so surrounded with trees and bushes that there was not much to be seen of it except bits here and there: a peering chimney, patches of red-stained roof, a portion of gray wall and the front door painted a bright, cheerful blue. Sloping away to the rocky point lay Captain Saulsby's garden, with its rows of vegetables and shrubs and flowers. Captain Saulsby himself was sitting in an armchair on the wide, stone doorstep, but alas he did not look in the least as Billy had expected.

He had pictured old sailors as being white-haired, but sturdy and upright, dressed in blue clothes and moving with a rolling walk or sitting to stare out to sea through a brass telescope. Captain Saulsby's hair was not exactly white, it was indeed no particular color on earth; he wore shabby overalls a world too big even for his vast figure and he had carpet slippers instead of picturesque sea-boots. Yet the flavour of the sea somehow clung to him after all, brought out, perhaps, by the texture of his face which was red and weather-beaten with the skin wrinkled and thickened to the consistency of alligator leather, and by his huge rough hands that resembled nothing so

much as the gnarled and stunted willow-trees at his gate.

Instead of grasping a telescope, he was holding a bright blue sock which he was mending as deftly as though well used to the task. The darning needle seemed lost between his big fingers, but it went in and out with great speed, pushed by a sailor's palm instead of a thimble. That, Billy thought disappointedly, was the only really nautical thing about him.

"Good afternoon, Johann Happs," the captain called cheerily as the first of his visitors came near. Then peering over his spectacles at Billy, he added, "Who is that behind you?"

The boy whom he called Johann wheeled suddenly and turned upon Billy a look that he could never forget. Terror, desperation and defiance all were written on his unhappy face and in his startled eyes. When he saw, however, that it was not the black-haired man who had peered over the wall, but only a boy from the summer colony at the hotel, his evident bewilderment and relief might have been almost ridiculous had they not been pathetic. He laughed shakily and turned to the captain.

"I do not know who it is," he said, "Perhaps someone to buy strawberries."

"You're Miss Mattie Pearson's nephew, now I'll be bound," remarked the old man, surveying Billy carefully from head to foot as he came closer. "She told me all about you, where you had meant to go this summer and how you came here instead and maybe weren't going to like us here on Appledore Island. Johann, look at that frown on his face; I don't think he has sized us up very fair so far, do you? Well, he'll learn, he'll learn!"

Billy frowned more deeply than ever, partly because he had no taste for being made sport of by a stranger and partly because the memory of his recent disappointments came back to him with a fresh pang. His plan for this summer had been to camp out in the Rockies, to climb mountains, to ride horseback, fish in the roaring, ice-cold little trout streams and to shoot grouse when the season came around. His father and mother had promised him just such a program; they were all three to carry it out together, being the three most congenial camping comrades that ever lived. However, sudden developments of business, due to the war in Europe and the necessity of turning in other directions for trade, had called his father to South America at just the season

when Billy could not leave school to go also. It was during the Easter vacation that he had travelled from his school in the Middle West to New York, to see his father and mother off on their long voyage; then he had gone back unwillingly to face continuous days of missing them and of rebelling vainly against the destruction of his hopes for the summer.

When Miss Mattie Pearson, his mother's sister, had invited her reluctant nephew to stay at Appledore, she must have realized that the resources of the hotel and the little fishing village that the Island boasted, would scarcely be sufficient to satisfy him. She seemed to have been thinking of Captain Saulsby even when she wrote her first letter, for she had said, "I hope you will find one companion, at least, who will interest you." She had a great affection for the queer, gruff, bent, old sailor, and must have felt that he and the boy were bound to become friends. And now Billy, standing before the captain himself, shifting uneasily from foot to foot and looking into those small, twinkling blue eyes, was beginning, much to his surprise, to feel the same thing.

"There are some strawberries down yonder

in the best patch, that I have been saving for your Aunt," the old man went on. "I'm glad you came along, for this isn't one of my spry days and I couldn't carry them up to the hotel myself. I have been expecting Jacky Shute to take them, but the young monkey hasn't turned up. You didn't see him, did you, Johann, as you came along?"

"No," replied Johann hastily, much too hastily, Billy thought, "I saw no one, not anyone at all."

Billy looked at him in amazement. He did not seem at all like the kind of person who could tell such a lie. Nor did he appear to enjoy telling it, for he stammered, turned red, picked up his bag of tools and set them down again.

"I will go in and mend the clock now, if you don't mind, Captain Saulsby," he said, perhaps in the desire to escape further questioning.

"Go right in and do anything you like to it," the old man returned, "and meanwhile this young fellow and I will go down and get the berries. Just reach me that basket of boxes, will you, and give me a hand up out

of this chair, and we'll be off. The clock is ticking away as steadily as old Father Time himself, but I suppose you will find some tinkering to do."

He took up the heavy wooden stick that leaned against his chair and that looked as rough and knobby and weather-worn as himself. With Johann's help he rose slowly from his seat, making Billy quite gasp at the full sight of how big he was. Yet he would have been much bigger could he have stood upright, for he was bent and twisted with rheumatism in every possible way; his shoulders bowed, his back crooked, his knees and elbows warped quite out of their natural shape. He wrinkled his forehead under the stress of evident pain and breathed very hard as he stumped down the path, but for a few moments he said nothing.

"Kind of catches me a little when I first get up," he remarked cheerfully at last. "There have been three days of fog and that's always bad for a man as full of rheumatics as I am. I hope you won't mind very much gathering the berries yourself. I—I—" his face twisted with real agony as he stumbled

over a stone. "I find it takes me a pretty long time to stoop my old back over the rows and some folks would rather not wait."

"Indeed I don't mind," replied Billy with cordial agreement to the plan. He had no reluctance in owning to himself that, however discontented he was with things in general, here was one person at least whom he was going to like.

"Now," said Captain Saulsby as they reached the strawberry patch at the foot of the garden, "eat as many as you can and fill the boxes as full as you can carry them away. That is what berries are made for, so go to it."

This invitation was no difficult one to accept. The berries were big and ripe and sweet, and warm with the warmth of the pleasant June day. It was still and hot there in the sun, with no sound except the booming of the surf along the shore, and the shrill call of a katydid in the hedge at Billy's elbow.

The glittering sea stretched out on each side of them, for Captain Saulsby's garden lay along the point that formed the northernmost end of Appledore Island. A coasting schooner, her decks piled high with new, yel-

low lumber, came beating into the wind on one side of the rocky headland, finally doubled it and, spreading her sails wing-and-wing, went skimming away before the breeze. Billy, whose whole knowledge of boats included only canoes and square, splashing Mississippi River steamers, sat back on his heels watching, open-mouthed, as the graceful craft sped off as easily as a big bird.

"Say, young fellow, your aunt will be waiting a long time for those berries," was Captain Saulsby's drawling reminder that brought him back to his senses. He blushed, recollected quickly that he was the boy who hated the Island of Appledore and everything belonging to it, and fell to picking strawberries again with his back to the schooner. The little katydid began to sing again.

"That's a queer fellow, that Johann Happs," the old sailor remarked reflectively as he sat watching Billy's vigorous industry. "He is a German; at least his father was, although Johann was born in this country and is as American as any one of us. He is as honest and straightforward a boy as I have ever known and has been a friend of mine as long as I have lived here. But there is something

wrong with him lately that he is keeping from me. I wish I could manage to guess what it is."

"Did you say he mends clocks for a living?" Billy asked. He decided that he would not betray Johann's secret, little as he knew of it, and much as he desired to learn more.

"No, clock-mending is his recreation, not his business. He is a mechanic, and a good faithful worker, but when he wants to be really happy he just gets hold of a bunch of old rusty wheels and weights, that hasn't run for twenty years, and works at them by the hour. To see him tinkering would show you where his real genius is. He gave me a clock that belonged to his father, a queer old thing with gold roses on the face and with wooden wheels, but it runs like a millionaire's watch. He comes around once in so often to see if it is doing its duty, and has six fits if it has lost a second in a couple of weeks. He's a queer fellow."

"Then he isn't a fisherman," commented Billy. "I thought that every one who lived on the Island was that."

"Almost every one is, except that boy and me," answered the Captain. "No, Johann

isn't a fisherman, but you never saw any one in your life who can sail a boat the way he can. That's his little craft anchored off the point there; she's the very apple of his eye. Just see how he keeps her; I do believe he would give her a new coat of paint every week if he could afford it. He's surely proud of her! He was so happy with her a little while back that I can't understand what has come over him now."

He sat staring at the little boat, until Billy finally had filled his boxes and had risen to his feet.

"I have picked all these for Aunt Mattie," he said, "and have eaten about twice as many besides. Now won't you let me pick some for you?"

"Why, that's good of you," returned the old man gratefully. "I won't deny that it is easier work sitting here and watching you gather them than to try to get the pesky things myself. I don't need any myself but I did want to send some to Mrs. Shute, over beyond the creek. They are just right for putting up now and will be almost too ripe in another day. That rascal Jacky should have taken them, but there's no knowing where he is."

"I'll pick them and take them to her, if you will tell me the way," Billy assured him. "Don't say no; I would really like to."

The boxes filled rapidly, to the accompaniment of much earnest talk between Billy and his new friend. He learned how little to be relied upon was Jacky Shute, the Captain's assistant gardener; what an unusual number of summer visitors on the Island there were, owing to the war in Europe and the impossibility of people's going abroad; what a cold, windy spring it had been, very bad for vegetables and for the poppies that were the pride of Appledore gardens but—

"Great for sailing," the old man concluded wistfully.

When the berries were ready, the Captain came with Billy to the edge of the garden to show him the way. Beyond the point, on its western shore-line, was a stretch of curving beach, cut into a deep harbour by the mouth of a little stream.

"You cross that meadow above the rocks," the Captain directed, "and go straight on down to the creek. You will find a row of stepping stones that makes almost a bridge; the tide is nearly dead low so it will certainly

be uncovered and you can cross without trouble. The stream is the mill creek, and that building you see on the other side, among the trees, is the old mill. You go up from the creek right past the mill door and follow the road that leads through the woods. The first lane that turns off from that will take you to the Shutes', so you see you can't miss the way. They have a nice girl, Sally Shute; I hope she'll be at home for I know you'll like her. She is worth twenty of Jacky, that worthless young brother of hers." He turned back to the garden. "Well, good-bye; I know you won't have any trouble getting there but don't stay too long, the tide is pretty quick to cover the causeway over the creek and then you would have to walk five miles around by the highroad. I will see you when you come back and I surely am obliged to you."

Billy set off with his load of boxes under his arm, stepping carefully through the tall grass of the meadow where daisies nodded in white profusion and bayberries and brambles grew thickly along the stony edge of the field. He came presently in sight of the stream and the bridge-like stepping stones, finding them, as Captain Saulsby had said, just uncovered

by the dropping tide. One huge rock jutted far out into the water at the edge of the little harbour, and here he found himself tempted to stop a minute, staring at the foaming green water, then to climb down from ledge to ledge and finally to seat himself just above where the surf was breaking.

How cool and deep the tumbling waves were, how they came rolling solemnly in, and then seemed to hesitate for one short second before they broke and sent spattering showers up to his very feet. He must go on, of course; it was really a shame to delay longer; he would just watch another breaker come in, and then another—and another, so that he might see again those shining rainbows that came and went in the sunlit spray.

He heard something scurry and scuttle across the rock near by him and, as he looked over the edge, saw a slim, brown mink come out of a hole and stop to look up at him. It must have had a nest near by, for it was fierce in its anger at his intrusion and seemed quite unafraid. Its wicked little eyes fairly snapped with rage, and it made a queer hissing sound as it tried, with tiny fury, to frighten him away. He laughed and turned to go,

then started back suddenly as he spied a face peering out at him for a moment from behind the big, grey rock above him. It struck him, startled as he was, that the human face was something like the mink's; the same narrow cruel jaw, the same retreating forehead, the little beady black eyes and stiff black hair. With a great effort, although his heart hammered at his ribs and his knees shook a little, if the truth must be told, he climbed up to the jutting rock and looked behind it. There was no one there. He drew a sigh of relief at the thought that he must have been mistaken, then checked it sharply when he saw a black shadow, thin, lithe and quickly-moving, slip across the surface of the rocks and vanish.

CHAPTER II

THE MILL-CREEK ROAD

BILLY'S passage over the causeway was a hasty and somewhat perilous one, for the rocks were overgrown with thick, brown seaweed and still wet from the falling tide. Considering what a hurry he was in and how many times he looked back over his shoulder, it was quite remarkable that he made the crossing without mishap. He walked up a strip of sandy beach, climbed a steep bank and came into the cool, dark pine woods. The faint marks of an old road showed before him, covered with a rusty-brown carpet of fallen needles and leading past the big, grey empty mill of which the Captain had spoken. He followed along it, turned down the lane as directed and tramped some distance straight through the forest, the tall black trees towering above him and the partridge berries, trailing ground pine and slender swinging Indian pines growing thick beneath his feet.

It was more than a mile, perhaps nearly two, that he covered before he observed a clearing ahead of him, and then came suddenly to the edge of the woods and to the shore again. A very neat, brown cottage stood in the open space, with a garden around it, a fence of white palings and a green gate at the end of the lane. Beyond the house he could see grey rocks, a little pier stretching out into the water, a fishing boat at anchor and, as a background to everything, the bright, sunlit sea. He opened the gate and came slowly through the garden.

A little girl was stooping over one of the round flowerbeds, picking pansies into her white apron. She was a short and solid little person, with thick yellow braids, very round pink cheeks and, as she looked up at him, a most cordial welcoming smile.

"I'm Sally Shute," she announced somewhat abruptly and without a particle of shyness; then, as Billy hesitated, "I believe I would like to know who you are."

"I'm Billy Wentworth, and I brought these strawberries from Captain Saulsby," the boy answered, a little abashed at this sudden plunge into the business of getting acquainted.

"The Captain said he was sorry not to send them sooner."

He could not seem to think of anything else to say, that was of especial importance, so turned to go.

"Wait," Sally commanded, in the tone of one who is used to having her orders obeyed. "I must take the berries to my mother and have her empty them out, because Captain Saulsby will want his boxes back again. And I think,"—here she looked him over solemnly from head to foot—"I think that you look thirsty."

Billy grinned and admitted that there might be some reason for that appearance.

Getting acquainted with Sally was as rapid a process as had been getting acquainted with Captain Saulsby. The tall glass of cold milk and the plate of fresh gingerbread certainly put an end to any formalities between them, and the expedition down to the hen-house to see the new brood of deliciously round, fat ducklings carried them far on the road toward friendship. Billy thought that the ducks looked rather like Sally herself, they were so small and fat and yellow and so very sure of themselves, but he did not summon courage

to say so. Next, they went down to the pier to see, "the biggest big fish you ever saw, that my father brought in last night."

This, Billy felt, was more worth showing him than were mere ducklings, but he did not admit being impressed by the size of the fish, although in truth it was a monster, nearly as long as the dory that held it. He stood passing his hand over the slippery surface of its silver scales and listening to the thrilling tale of its capture, recounted by Sally with as much spirit as though she herself had been present. She broke off in the middle of her story, however, to exclaim:

"Gracious, I'm keeping you here until maybe the tide will be over the causeway and you can't get back. That would never do!"

They hurried up to the house, gathered the berry boxes together in haste, and went toward the gate.

"I'll not forgive myself if I have made you miss the tide," Sally said. "I think I will walk with you as far as the creek to make sure."

She chattered continuously as they went down the wooded lane, telling him what the different flowers and birds were, what games

she and her brother played there among the trees, where her father's land ended, and where Captain Saulsby's began.

"The Captain owns almost all of this end of the Island," she said. "His father or maybe his grandfather built the mill and used to run it. There were grain fields over most of Appledore then, and people farmed more and fished less. Captain Saulsby doesn't do anything with the land except the little piece his house is on; he has not really lived here a great many years. He ran away when he was a boy and sailed all over the world, and only came back to settle down when he got too old to go to sea."

Her talk did not remain long on the subject of the Captain, however, but presently, in response to a question of Billy's, wandered away to Johann Happs.

"Yes, I know him, and I like him too. He comes every so often to fix our clocks, mend the locks and things that won't work, sharpen up the tools and put us in order generally. He's so cheerful and honest: there's not a person on the Island that doesn't admire Joe and trust him."

Billy shook his head silently; he could make

nothing, so far, of this strange affair of Johann Happs. He had not time to reflect on the puzzle long, for presently they met some one coming down the lane toward them.

"He's queerer than the Captain or Johann too," thought Billy, and with some reason. The man who approached was as unusual as were the old sailor and Johann Happs, with one variation. Those two, one liked at once; this person it was impossible not to detest the moment one laid eyes upon him.

He was small and pinched-looking, with greyish sandy hair and a sallow face. His eyes were light-coloured and shifty, seeming to have a rooted objection to looking straight at any one. He wore white shoes that were very shabby and checked clothes of a cut that was meant to be extremely fashionable—and was not. His straw hat was put on at a jaunty, youthful angle, but, when he took it off to greet Sally with a flourish, he betrayed the fact that he was growing bald and a little wrinkled.

"Very pretty woods you have here, very pretty," he observed, holding out a hand which obstinate Miss Sally pretended not to notice.

"They aren't our woods; they are Captain

Saulsby's," she replied ungraciously. "His land begins back there."

"Ah, very true, Miss Shute," the man went on. "He's rather a queer one, our friend the Captain, now isn't he? He hardly seems to remember the place is his, I think. Doesn't come here very often and look after his boundary fences and all that, does he?"

Even Billy could see that the man's eagerness betrayed him and that he asked the last question a shade too anxiously. Sally observed it as plain as day and had no hesitation about saying so.

"If you want to find out all that so much, you had better ask Captain Saulsby himself," she told him emphatically. "I really think he knows best about his own affairs."

"You are right," the other agreed instantly, "and I will ask him. But you see,"—here he dropped his voice to a very confidential tone—"the old Captain is a hard man to do business with, very hard. I am trying to buy this land of him, not for myself, you understand, but for a friend, a man who is a stranger in these parts, and immensely wealthy. He has taken a fancy to Appledore Island and wants to

build a summer home here, and an elegant place it is to be; he has actually shown me the plans. It seems he has set his heart on buying the mill-creek property from the Captain, but, dear, dear, what an obstinate creature the old fellow is! We have offered him a good price and of course he is only holding out for more money; but he has tried my patience almost to its end. I am wondering if he has a clear title to all these acres he owns. You never heard your father say anything to that effect, did you, my dear?"

He bent forward and his hard little eyes fairly glittered as he put the question. Sally, however, as a source of information, was quite as disappointing as Captain Saulsby.

"Harvey Jarreth," she announced firmly, "you are always going round asking questions about other people's business, but I, for one, won't answer them. And my father won't either, and besides, he's not at home."

"Very well," returned Jarreth cheerfully, "*very* well."

It was evidently no new thing to him to receive replies as tart as Sally's. He turned on his heel and marched away down the lane be-

fore them, swinging his shoulders and his cane, yet somehow not giving the careless effect that he so plainly wished.

"Everybody hates Harvey Jarreth," Sally explained when he was out of hearing. "I know it was not polite to talk to him so, but he makes me so angry that I never can help it. He is always getting the best of people and boasting about it, making money on sharp bargains, finding out things that aren't his concern and then profiting by them. No one can trust him and no one can like him."

"Does he really want to buy Captain Saulsby's land, do you think?" Billy asked.

"He says so. My father thinks it would be a good thing for the Captain if he could sell it, and if there really is such a person as Harvey Jarreth tells about, who wants to buy it for a house. None of us has ever seen any such friend of his. And Captain Saulsby is a queer old man; he is dreadfully poor, yet you can't possibly tell whether he will agree or not. It would be like Mr. Jarreth to get the land from him some other way, if he can't buy it. He is so sharp at such things and the Captain is so careless!"

They had come to the mill-creek road by

now, and were passing the door of the mill itself.

"That's a funny old place," Billy observed. "Does any one live there?"

"People lived in it a good while after it had stopped being used as a mill," Sally said, "but it is empty now. Would you like to look in?"

The big timbered door was fastened only by an iron latch, so there was no difficulty about pushing it open and peeping in. The whole of the lower floor was one great room, with a crooked flight of rickety stairs at the back, leading up to the second story. The windows were small, making the interior full of shadows and very cool and dark after the hot sunshine outside. There was a big fireplace of rough stones, a bench near it, a table and a broken chair or two, with a three-legged stool in the chimney corner.

"Jacky and I come here to play sometimes," said Sally, "although he doesn't like it much. People used to say it was haunted, but of course that's nonsense. Still it is pretty dark and queer and rather too full of strange creakings when you are alone."

They closed the door again, went down the

steps and along the road and parted on the beach.

"I'm glad you came," said Sally; "you must come again. Now hurry, or the tide will catch you. I think Harvey Jarreth has gone on to Captain Saulsby's ahead of you. Good-bye."

As Billy hastened across the stepping-stones and through the meadow, he looked very sharply and very often down toward the rocks, but could see no signs of any one's presence. Sally was right; Harvey Jarreth had gone ahead of him and was standing now by the bench near the hedge, in hot dispute with the old Captain.

"I never saw a man so blind to his own interests," he was saying. "I believe you are out of your senses. Come now, say what figure you will really take."

"You could cover the land with gold pieces for me and I wouldn't sell," returned the old sailor with determination. "I'm not saying that it isn't a good offer for me in some ways, but I will part with no property to a man who won't give his name or state his business. If I'm to take his money, I must know where it comes from."

"It is perfectly natural that my friend should ask me not to give his name," Jarreth insisted. "And as for the money, what do you care where it comes from, just so you make something? What do you want with all those acres your father left you, when you only can dig up one corner of it to plant a few miserable poppies in?"

"What does your friend want of it?" retorted the Captain; "and by the way, how does it happen you have such a friend? How long have you known him?"

"Why—why, not long," admitted Jarreth, "but he's all right, I know that, and able to buy the whole of Appledore Island twice over. Well, I suppose you are standing out for a bigger price and I will just have to tell him so."

"I'm standing out for nothing of the sort, you everlasting lunkhead," roared the old man, completely exasperated, "and I'll waste no more time talking to you."

"I'll just step up to the house and rest a little there in the shade," Jarreth said. "I have a long walk home, so I might as well give you time first to think this well over. You will see reason in the end."

The Captain made no reply, but deliberately

turned his back upon Jarreth as he walked away, and began puffing furiously at his pipe.

"Well, Billy Wentworth," he said, taking his first notice of the boy, who had stood waiting until the altercation should end, "how did you like Sally Shute?"

"I liked her lots," Billy replied with enthusiasm, "and I am glad I went. Here are your boxes: I will carry them up to the house."

"Sit down a bit until I finish my pipe," the Captain said. "That persistent cuss is waiting up there at the cottage and we may as well let him cool his heels a while. His time isn't worth anything except to think up mischief."

Billy took his place on the bench beside the old sailor and sat staring out to sea.

"What is Johann Happs doing out there in his boat?" he inquired at last. "Is he going to sail her?"

"I think not today," Captain Saulsby answered. "He is always working out there at something or other. He is as fond of her as though she were his own kin. He hasn't any one belonging to him, maybe that is why he loves her so."

Just at this moment a small boy came loung-

ing down the path with as little hurry as though all the world were waiting for him. He was short and fat and looked so much like a lesser edition of Sally that there could be no doubt of his being Jacky Shute.

"I'm just a-goin' to weed those onions, Captain Saulsby," he said hastily, to prevent the old sailor's speaking first. "I stayed down by the wharf a little late, fishing, but there's plenty of time yet. It's not five o'clock."

He scurried away across the garden, leaving the Captain sputtering with helpless indignation.

"That's the kind of helper I have," he exclaimed. "Comes when he likes, goes when he likes, does what he likes. His mother and Sally can't do a thing with him. And stupid! Why, there's nothing you can teach him, no matter how you try. He has fished and paddled along this shore all his life, but he doesn't know a thing about boats; he can't tell the difference between a sloop and a knockabout. And what's more,—" here the old man turned full upon Billy and dropped his voice as though he hated to speak so dreadful a thing aloud—"what's more, he says he doesn't *want* to know."

Billy opened his mouth to say something in reply, and then shut it again. He realized that the ignorance of which the Captain spoke was as great as would be the inability to distinguish between a dog and a cat, but he was unwilling to betray the fact that he was as much in the dark as Jacky Shute. A few hours ago he would have been quite scornful of any such knowledge; now he felt a strong desire to hide his ignorance, a desire which, in turn, gave way to an even greater wish. He fought against it, reminded himself over and over again how determined he was to despise everything that had to do with the sea, how he hated Appledore and would have no interest in it. But there was something about the rough old sailor's bent figure, broken by a hundred tempests yet strong and determined still, there was something about the tossing blue water, about the wide, unbroken horizon, about the fresh, sharp, salt air that made him feel—well, different in a most indefinable way.

They sat in silence for a little while until the old man's pipe was smoked out, and Billy felt that it was time for him to go. He rose, held out his hand to say good-bye, and then

suddenly felt his wish so strong within him that it broke forth into words.

"Captain Saulsby," he said, "I don't know the difference between a sloop and a knock-about, either. I don't know anything about the sea or about boats. I wish you would teach me."

The sailor's gnarled old brown hand was laid very gently on his shoulder.

"Bless you, how should you know," he answered; "you that never saw salt water before today? Sure, I'll teach you anything I know; sit right down again and listen."

Miss Mattie Pearson, up at the hotel, must have rocked and knitted and knitted and rocked a long, long time that day as she watched for her nephew's return. The bright red sock that she was making for the Belgians grew several inches, the other guests went in to dinner, but still she waited, nor did she seem impatient. She was spare and elderly and beginning to be white-haired; she might have answered well enough to Billy's description of her as an "old maid aunt" but she had keen grey eyes that had been able to look pretty deeply into her nephew's rebellious young

soul. He had been sullen and discontented ever since his arrival that morning and, if he had made any efforts to conceal his state of mind, they had not been successful ones. So she had sent him off in the direction of Captain Saulsby's house and seemed not in the least surprised or displeased that he was so long in coming back. Old maid aunts sometimes have a way of knowing things, just from the fact that they have lived so long.

Meanwhile Billy was still sitting on the bench listening, entranced, to details of full-rigged ships, schooners, yawls, raceabouts and dories. His head began to reel under the weight of all the knowledge poured out upon him, so that, finally, it was only with mighty effort that he followed what the Captain was saying. Even the old sailor realized this at length and decided to have mercy.

"I will tell you what we can do," he said. "We will make you a model; schooner-rigged, we will have her, with everything complete and shipshape, so that you can learn the ropes too well ever to forget them. No," as Billy tried to remonstrate, "of course I will have time. What is an old man good for, when he can't follow the sea any longer, but to hand on

what he knows to some one who will do him credit some day? Yes, we will build you a model and she shall be called the *Josephine,* after the first ship I ever sailed in; the finest one that ever crossed the seas."

As Billy finally took his way homeward, his mind was a seething mass of nautical terms which he vainly tried to set in order.

"The gaff holds the top of the mainsail," he was saying to himself, "and the jib-boom—"

Here he was obliged to interrupt the repetition of his lesson by laughing aloud at the memory of his last view of Captain Saulsby. Harvey Jarreth had been waiting at the cottage, true to his word, so that Billy's final sight of the two had shown him the little eager man still pouring out a flood of argument, while the Captain sat unconcernedly darning his blue sock once more, and whistling as gaily as though Jarreth and his real-estate project were a thousand miles away.

However, just before Billy passed out through the gap in the wall, he saw something that drove both lesson and laughter completely from his mind. He had stopped to take one more look at the little house, the sloping gar-

den, the steep rocks running out into the foaming surf and at Johann Happs' trim little boat riding at anchor just inside the harbour. One glance showed him clearly that the vessel was in distress, but how or why he could not tell. She seemed to be settling slowly in the water, indeed had already sunk so deep that the waves were breaking over her. And, strangest of all, Johann Happs was standing, with folded arms, upon the beach, staring at her but quite unmoving, never lifting a hand to rescue his beloved boat.

CHAPTER III

THE CRUISE OF THE JOSEPHINE

THE North Atlantic fleet of the United States Navy was playing its war game off the coast of New England, with a large part of the manœuvres apparently arranged for the especial benefit of the visitors on Appledore Island. For three days ships had been plying steadily back and forth in the offing; huge dreadnaughts whose like Billy had never seen before, smaller cruisers and swift slender destroyers that ran in and out amongst the rest of the fleet like greyhounds. Even the knitting brigade on the hotel verandah deserted its usual task of rocking and gossiping and plying swift needles for the relief of the Belgians, and instead came down to the wharf to stare out to sea, to wonder what this boat was, or what that ship could be doing, and what it was all about anyway. The one or two men in the company were able to tell much of just what the whole plan was, and just what each

division of the fleet was trying to do to the other. Unfortunately none of these learned dissertations on naval strategy ever seemed to agree, and the eager questioners went back to their watching rather more puzzled than before.

Two young naval officers were actually quartered at the Appledore Hotel, but they spent all their time observing the ships' movements from the highest point of the island, or signalling from one of the headlands. When they could be stopped and questioned they seemed to display such pitiful ignorance alongside of the fluent knowledge of the lecturers on the wharf that it hardly seemed worth while to ask them anything.

The first three days had been dull and foggy, making the manœuvres even more confusing than usual to the uninstructed mind; so Billy, who had done his best to have no interest in the matter, finally proclaimed loudly that the whole business was a great bore and that he would waste no more time, in watching it. But on the fourth day, a clear cloudless one, with brisk winds and a sea so bright that it fairly hurt your eyes to look at it, he went down to see his friend Captain Saulsby and

found that he, too, was caught by the fascination of this same war game.

"I wish I could see the way I used to," the old man sighed as he put down his battered telescope—Billy felt better about him when he found that he actually had one—and leaned back in his chair by the door. "That ship that's going by now is either the *Kentucky* or the *Alabama* and for the life of me I can't tell which. I've watched them off this point for a lot of years now, and never could see so little before. I do believe,"—he spoke as though the suspicion had only just occurred to him—"that I'm getting old!"

A week ago Billy might have felt inclined to laugh at any one who was so bowed down with years but who seemed so surprised on discovering the fact. Now, however, he had become too fast a friend of the Captain's for that. A man who could endure pain as unfalteringly as Captain Saulsby did, who, although nearly a cripple, could still work for his scanty living and never complain of the toil and hardship, such a person was not to be laughed at.

Moreover, on the Captain's knee was the model of the boat that was to teach Billy

something of seamanship, the *Josephine,* a very marvel of graceful lines and intricate rigging. Such loving, patient care as had gone into the building of the little craft only those two would ever know. The Captain's rough thick fingers had worked wonders; Billy's impatient, unskilled ones had done their full share. The two had had long talks together over their labours, in which the boy had learned much of odd sounding names and strange sea terms, but more of the adventures and hardships and restlessness of the life of those who follow the sea.

He did not admit to himself yet that he liked the sea, or that he was anything but disappointed and angry that he must spend his summer on the Island of Appledore, but he could not deny that there was a charm in the company of the old captain and that his stories of all that happened off this bit of rugged, rocky coast; of the smugglers that had hidden in the little harbour below the mill, of the privateers that had lain behind the island waiting until the enemy should pass, of the wrecks and daring rescues by the fishermen of the Island, all these were tales of which he never tired. He was full of questions to

ask today, and wanted first of all to know what the war game really meant.

"It's just practice," Captain Saulsby explained, "just to learn what to do if there was real war. Over across the sea they're playing the game in earnest; a mistake there means a lost ship and the crew drowned, and a greater danger to the country they're guarding like grim death. Please Heaven we won't have that over here, but there's many that are saying it is coming with another year."

"War—us!" exclaimed Billy incredulously. "Why, surely we couldn't have war!"

"It could come mighty easy," the Captain insisted, "but well, it's not here yet and that's something to be thankful for. But in this war game, they bring the fleet out for manœuvres and they play out their problems in naval tactics like a great big match of chess, with dreadnaughts and destroyers and submarines for the pieces and the whole wide ocean for their board. They divide up into two fleets and each one tries to destroy the other. There's no real sinking, you understand, but, for instance, a torpedo-boat tries to creep up to a battleship in the dark, and send up a rocket to show that she's supposed to have fired

a torpedo, then if she's near enough for an undoubted hit, why that vessel is counted as sunk. Or if the battleship finds her with the searchlights and she is so close that she could be smashed with a volley from the guns, why, it's the torpedo-boat that's sunk. So it goes."

"It sounds to me pretty silly," remarked Billy with some disdain.

"Wait until you've played it once, son," returned the sailor. "When you creep along in the dark to make an attack, or put on every ounce of steam you can to get away, when you know that each man must do his own part the best way he knows how, and that the honour of his ship may hang on every move he makes, why you forget a little that it's just a game. When it's over you surely come down with a bump, you have been so sure all along that it was the real thing."

Billy considered the matter idly for a little, scorning to show too much interest, even in spite of Captain Saulsby's enthusiasm. The old sailor himself seemed to be full of other thoughts, for when he spoke again it was as much to himself as to Billy.

"I wish I knew whatever could have sunk

Johann's boat," he said. "There was no storm nor any accident, and he certainly kept her in such good order that there was no chance of her having sprung a leak without his knowing it. The poor fellow surely loved her; he seems broken-hearted whenever you talk to him about her sinking, but he doesn't do a thing to try to raise her. I don't understand it."

It had seemed very strange to Billy also, especially in the light of what he had seen that day upon the shore. He made no comment now, however; indeed he had scarcely been listening, but had let his wandering wits take a sudden jump in the direction of quite different matters. When the old man had finished speaking he put a question that, had he known more of the ways of the sea and of sailor men, he would never have dared to ask.

"Captain Saulsby," he said, "what were you captain of? Was it in the Navy or just of the *Josephine?*"

"Bless you, no; not in the Navy or of the *Josephine,* either," replied his friend. "The *Josephine* was the first ship I ever sailed on when I was an apprentice boy, and the cap-

tain of her was such a great man that he hardly knew I was on board. No, I wasn't captain of the *Josephine.*"

"Well," insisted Billy, not to be put off, "what ship were you captain of?"

Captain Saulsby heaved a great sigh and was silent for a long time. He took up the little model from his knee and turned it over and over before he spoke.

"No, not of the *Josephine,*" he said again, "although I fully intended to be. Do you see that little catboat riding at anchor down by the wharf; the old, old grey one that's needed a coat of paint these two years past and a new sail for at least five? Well, that's the only craft that Ned Saulsby ever was skipper of, or ever will be."

He made this statement very abruptly and fell immediately to work on stepping a mast of the little vessel.

"There's a lot of kind-hearted folks in the world," he went on after a pause, "and some of them started calling me 'Captain' about the time my rheumatism got so bad that I could never go to sea again. They thought giving me the name would make me feel bet-

ter, and I guess it did, perhaps. When you've followed the sea since you were hardly more than so high, and suffered by it, won and lost by it, hated it and loved it, why it's not easy to find out, all of a sudden, that you've got to stop on shore for all the rest of your days."

Billy would have pursued the subject further, but the old man changed the course of the talk. He took up the model of the *Josephine* and set it down upon the doorstep beside the boy.

"Now, young fellow," he said cheerily, "suppose you name over these ropes as far as we have gone, and we'll see if you are as much of a landlubber as you were when you came here a week ago."

Billy, nothing loth, took up the challenge and went through his lesson with great credit, making nothing of naming the parts of the rigging of the little schooner and of running off lightly many terms that had so lately been pure Greek to him.

"Good," said the old man when he had finished. "I do believe that you can hope to be a sailor yet."

He said it with such confidence that this must surely be Billy's one ambition, that the boy made haste to correct him.

"I'm not going to be a sailor ever," he said. "I'm going into business and—and make a pile of money."

Captain Saulsby did not answer at once, for he was staring out beyond the point where one of the big battleships had chanced to come close in and was steaming by at full speed. Billy could see the tremendous wave that surged up before her bow; he watched the cloud of drifting smoke that poured from her funnels and he had suddenly a vision of what gigantic power must drive her so swiftly through the sea. It gave him a queer thrill, unlike anything that he had ever felt before, and, oddly enough, seemed to fill him with a sudden doubt as to the wisdom of his choice of a career. Buying and selling and making money might after all prove a dull occupation. Were there after all bigger things than Big Business? Such a question had never occurred to him before.

"Now," said the Captain, interrupting his reverie, "you just tell your aunt to come down

on the beach this afternoon and see the best boat this side of Cape Hatteras put to sea. These good warm days have baked some of the rheumatism out of me and I'm almost as good a man as you this morning. We'll go down to the rocks below the willows there and put the *Josephine* into the water. I hope she'll sail as pretty as she looks."

It was a great occasion, the launching of the *Josephine*. Aunt Mattie attended it, and broke a bottle of cologne over the little vessel's newly painted bow, to make a formal christening. There was a fresh wind that flecked the water with dancing white caps on one side of the point, but on the other, inside the harbour, afforded the best sort of breeze for a maiden trip. The sails were hoisted, the rudder adjusted and the little boat breathlessly lowered off the edge of a rock. She rocked and dipped upon the ripples in a bit of quiet water, then was pushed out until the wind caught her new white sails. How they curved to the breeze, how she heeled over just as a real vessel should and skimmed away as though she had a sailor at her helm and had set her course for far and foreign lands! The cord

by which she was held trailed out behind her, grew taut, and at last brought her successful journey sharply to an end.

"Pull her in and we'll try her on a different tack," directed Captain Saulsby much excited; "she surely can sail! We didn't hit it wrong when we named her the *Josephine.*"

Billy, who had no leanings of sentiment toward the name of Captain Saulsby's well-beloved first ship, had felt that *Josephine* was not the most perfect title in the world for his new and cherished vessel. Captain Saulsby, however, had seemed so hurt and disappointed when he even hinted at the possibility of another choice, that the idea had been dropped at once. Certainly the little boat was doing her best to be worthy of her so-famous namesake.

"I wish I had a longer string," said Billy; "it seems as though she only got a good start every time before I have to pull her in again."

"She doesn't have any chance to show what she can do," answered the Captain, regarding his handiwork with as proud and pleased an eye as did Billy himself. "Here, now, the wind is right and the tide is running in; why shouldn't we just launch her and let her sail

across the harbour. She will come ashore, surely, on that bit of sandy beach and we can walk round and pick her up. That will give her a chance to do a bit of real sailing."

The plan was readily agreed to by all concerned, apparently with the most heartiness by the *Josephine* herself. She dipped and danced irresolutely for a moment when first she was launched upon her new voyage, then spread her sails to the wind and scudded off like a racing yacht. Even Aunt Mattie joined in the chorus of cheers that celebrated the triumphant setting sail. Captain Saulsby's rheumatism seemed completely forgotten as he set off along the shore path to meet the boat when she came to port, with Aunt Mattie walking beside him.

Billy, lagging a little behind, looked up suddenly toward the rocks above him and caught a movement of something behind the biggest of the stones. The brown mink perhaps it was, but—possibly—something else. He climbed up to investigate, but found the rocks were slippery and not easy to scale, and that the smooth surface was hot under his hands. He reached the top of the biggest one at last and, not much to his surprise, found

no one there. Not a sign could he see of any presence but his own. He had been foolish to climb up—but wait—what was that?

Wet footprints showed on the grey stone surface, as though somebody had but now walked across the weed-fringed rocks, uncovered by the half tide, and had then crossed the drier space above. Such marks would only last for a moment under this hot sun; indeed, they faded and disappeared even as he stood staring at them. What was that gleam of sunlight on metal just beyond that stone? He went quickly to see and discovered a pair of field glasses, binoculars of the highest power, lying half tumbled out of their case, as though dropped in hasty flight. He picked them up, adjusted them to his eyes with some slight difficulty and turned them out to sea. At first he saw only a dazzling expanse of blue sky, then, as he shifted, an equally dazzling glare of blue water. Then quite by chance, the glass fell upon the warship, and he could see the sparkle of her shining brass work, the blue uniforms of tiny figures moving on her deck, the black gaping mouths of her big guns. He laid the glasses upon a ledge of rock, so that he should not

break them as he clambered down to a lower level. It was not easy climbing and he had to watch his footing carefully. Once below he reached up to get the binoculars down, failed to touch them and reached again. Still the rock was bare to his hand so he scrambled up to see what was the matter. The ledge was empty, they were gone!

Billy had a sudden feeling that it would be pleasant to rejoin Captain Saulsby and his Aunt as soon as it was possible. He was not afraid but—well such things were queer. There was something warmly comforting about the old sailor's hearty laugh as it came drifting back to him. He hurried quickly after the two with the unpleasant feeling that a pair of peering black eyes were watching him from somewhere as he passed along.

Miss Pearson had elected not to meet the *Josephine* when she came to port, but had turned aside to go down to the steamboat landing. She was going to Boston by the afternoon boat and had just heard the whistle calling her on board. She waved good-bye to Billy but motioned him to follow the Captain, who was trudging on alone. Billy would have come down to see her off, none the less,

had he not suddenly noticed something that knocked both the departure of Aunt Mattie and the affair of the field-glasses completely out of his head.

"Oh, look, Captain Saulsby," he cried; "look what's happened to the *Josephine!*"

Not one of them had noticed that the wind had changed. But the little *Josephine* had, for she had altered her course and instead of heading for the sandy beach opposite, was speeding away for the harbour's mouth and the open sea. The breeze was steadily freshening, the little boat as steadily gathering headway, so that it would not be long before she would pass the headland and be out of sight.

"Oh, stop her," cried Billy, in frantic excitement. "Oh, isn't there any way to stop her."

The old man was quite as distressed as he.

"We can't lose her," he exclaimed; "we never could lose the *Josephine!*" He stood gazing helplessly after the fast-vanishing little vessel. "What on earth can we do?"

He thought a minute and then turned to hurry awkwardly down the path toward the wharf.

"We'll take my cat-boat," he said; "she's not been sailed for a month of Sundays but she's seaworthy all right. The *Josephine* may have the start of us while we're getting up sail, but we'll catch her in the end."

It was wonderful what short work the old captain made of seizing upon a dory, rowing out to the little cat-boat that bobbed in the tide, boarding her and getting up sail. Billy's assistance was willing but extremely awkward, so that he hindered far more than he helped. At length, however, they were under weigh, riding gaily the gradually rising waves, and skimming along in the wake of the fleeing *Josephine.*

Captain Saulsby's burst of energy seemed to wear itself out with surprising quickness. Once they were well started he put the tiller into Billy's hand and went and sat down in the cockpit.

"I'm an old man," he said gloomily. "I'm not a sailor any longer, just an old man, and good for nothing."

Billy hardly heard him, so intent was he upon the responsibility of steering the boat. She was a clumsy little craft with a rather daring expanse of sail, she cut through the

water swiftly but was not easy to keep upon her course. The tiller jerked and kicked under his hand; there were times when he could scarcely hold it, and when the bow veered threateningly to one side or another. The Captain paid little attention to his difficulties but sat hunched up in his corner staring idly before him.

"There's a shoal place here off the headland," he remarked at last; "you'll have to make two or three tacks to get around it. That pesky *Josephine* can sail right over and will get more of a start than ever. If the tide were half an hour higher I would risk following. Now we've come so far we've got to get her."

"But—but—what do I do?" inquired Billy, quite bewildered at the task set him. A boy who has never sailed a boat before finds suddenly a whole world of things that he would like to know.

"Why, nothing but just come up into the wind, loose the sheet, lay your new course over toward the lighthouse there. Now's the minute—Ready about!"

Somehow, Billy never quite knew how, the thing was done. The bow swung round, the

big sail fluttered and trembled a moment, then came over with a rush, and the catboat was off on her new tack. To Billy it seemed as though the wind had totally changed in direction, as though the small vessel were tipping dangerously, and as though anything might happen at any moment, but he kept manfully silent about it all. If this was the way one learned to sail a boat, he supposed that he could master it as well as another.

Captain Saulsby seemed to be totally unaware of his torment of mind. He still sat, gazing moodily out to sea and saying not a word.

"You'd better come about now," he remarked suddenly when they had sailed some distance toward the lighthouse. After an instant of indecision and fumbling awkwardness, come about Billy did, with more ease this time, but no great knowledge of just what was happening. Once more they stood off on the new course, the tubby little craft rising and dipping bravely, Billy clinging to the tiller and beginning to feel suddenly that the boat was a live thing under his hand, ready to do his slightest bidding.

"Once more," ordered Captain Saulsby

when it was time to tack, and this time Billy accomplished it without a hitch.

"Captain Saulsby," he cried in beaming delight, "I can sail her, I know how to sail her!"

A slow broad grin illuminated Captain Saulsby's mahogany-colored countenance.

"I thought you could," he said slowly, "but it was a little ticklish at first, wasn't it? And, good Heavens, the wake you leave!"

Billy glanced backward at the line upon the water that marked the pathway of his course.

"It's not very straight," he admitted, "but the waves have mussed it up some. Oh, but it's great to sail a boat!"

The wind hummed in the rounding curve of the sail, the waves slapped and splashed along the boat's side, the Island of Appledore fell away behind them, and they came out into the full sweep of the open sea. Aunt Mattie's steamer was a black speck off toward the south, trailing a long, thin line of smoke. The sun that had shone so hot vanished presently behind a cloud, the water seemed to be a shade less blue, the little white sail of the fugitive *Josephine* seemed now and then to show mockingly ahead of them and now to disappear entirely. On they sped and on and on,

while Billy with the wind blowing through his hair and with his hand upon the quivering tiller, felt that he was quite the happiest boy in the world.

"Tell me, Captain Saulsby," he asked idly at last, "what makes the water look so queer over there to the north?"

The Captain, who had been puffing comfortably upon his pipe and had almost, it seemed, fallen into a doze, turned slowly and awkwardly to look where Billy pointed. In the twinkling of an eye he became transformed into a different man.

"Old fool that I am," he cried, "sitting here and not keeping a look-out! Half asleep I must have been and in such tricky weather, too."

He sprang up and was at Billy's side in one movement. What pain such activity must have cost him it would be hard to tell; his weather-beaten face turned almost pale, and drops of moisture stood on his forehead. He seized the tiller and gave Billy a sharp succession of orders, which the poor boy was too bewildered to more than half understand.

"Cast off that rope, not that one, no, no, the other, quick, oh, if only I could reach it!"

He groaned aloud, not so much with the pain he must have felt, but with the helpless impatience of knowing himself to be unequal to the crisis. The deeper blue streak of water that Billy had pointed out, became rapidly darker and darker until it was grey, then black, and came rushing toward them at furious speed. The litle cat-boat swung round to meet it. Billy tugged manfully at the sheet and noticed, with sudden consternation, that the strands of the rope had been frayed against the cleat and showed a dangerously weak place.

"What shall I do?" he cried. "Look, quick—" but he spoke too late.

The squall struck them, the sheet parted with a crack like a pistol shot and in an instant the great sail was flapping backward and forward over their heads like a mad thing. The heavy boom swung over and then back with sickening jerks, the old rotten mast groaned, creaked, then suddenly, with a splintering crash, went overboard dragging with it a mass of cordage and canvas.

In wild haste Captain Saulsby and Billy strove to cut away the wreckage, but they were not quick enough. The boat heeled over

farther and farther, the water came pouring in over the gunwale. There was a harrowing moment of suspense, then their little craft turned completely over, throwing them both into the water, amid the tangle of sail and rigging.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN SAULSBY'S WATCH

FOR full half a minute Billy was quite certain that he was drowned and did not like it at all. The wet ropes and the heavy canvas clung to him, apparently determined that once he went down he should never come up again. For a gasping moment he managed to get his head above water, had a sharp, clear vision of the wide sea, the cloudy sky and Appledore Island with its green slopes and wooded hills: then he went down again. His next attempt was more fortunate, however, for he came up clear of the wreckage and not far from the boat, which was still afloat, bottom upwards. He swam to her in a few strokes and, after one or two efforts, managed to clamber up her slippery hull. What was his joy and relief, on scrambling high enough to peer over the centreboard, to see Captain Saulsby slowly and laboriously crawling up the other side.

"Give us a hand up, boy," he said a little breathless, but speaking in the calmest and

cheeriest of tones. "I'm not so spry as I used to be, but I'll make it all right—er—ouch, but those barnacles are sharp. I should never have let the boat get such a foul bottom. Now," as he came up beside Billy, "there we are as fine as you please. We'll just have to wait a couple of hours, and some one will be sure to pick us up. There's nothing to worry about in a little spill like this. See, the squall's gone by and the clouds are clearing away already."

Billy looked about him and was not so sure. To be perched upon the keel of a capsized boat, rocking precariously with every wave, to have miles of empty ocean on every side is a little disturbing the first time you try it. So at least he concluded as he watched the sun drop slowly toward the horizon.

The war game had drifted away to the north, so that, for the first time in days, there was not a vessel of any kind in sight. Above them the clouds were assuredly blowing away, but over in the west another bank of them, thick and grey and threatening, was rising very slowly to meet the sun. There could also be little doubt that the wind was steadily freshening and the waves splashing higher and

higher along the sides of their little boat. All these things Captain Saulsby seemed cheerfully determined to ignore, so Billy decided that it was best for him to say nothing."

"I've had a lot of little adventures like this in my day," the old sailor went on. "It makes me feel quite young again to be in just one more. Why, the first time was when a sampan capsized when we were landing from the *Josephine* in the harbor of Hongkong. I'll never forget how I laughed out loud with the queer, warm tickle of the water, when I'd thought for sure it was going to be icy cold. I couldn't have been much bigger than that."

He tried to hold up a hand to show Billy the exact height he had been, but so nearly lost his balance in the process that he was obliged to clutch hastily at the slippery support again.

"Did you really go to sea when you were so little?" Billy asked. "I wonder your people let you."

"They weren't any too willing," returned the Captain; "in fact, they weren't willing at all. My folks were like yours, though you wouldn't think it; they were people with book-learning, doctors and lawyers and the like. They wanted me to be the same, and when I

wouldn't, but was all for going to sea, they said very well, a sailor I could be, but first I must go to school, for sailors must have learning too. But I couldn't wait; the wish for the blue water was in my very blood, so I slipped away and shipped for China before they knew it. That was a hard voyage in some ways, but a wonder of a one in others, and when I came home I would listen to nothing they said, but was off and away again before I had been in port much more than a week."

"And you've sailed and sailed and sailed ever since?" Billy asked. A sharp dip of the boat nearly upset him but he managed to speak calmly. He thought it a good plan to keep the old man talking that he might not notice the rising clouds behind him.

"Yes, sometimes on sailing ships and sometimes on steamers, in every trade and bound for every port on earth. I drifted into the Navy at last, and was a bluejacket on just such a battleship as we saw go by today, and it was in that service that I first began to see what a mistake I had made. There were, among the young officers, boys not half my age, but knowing four times more than I ever would. I had to salute when they spoke to me, and I was

glad to do it, for it is the like of them and not the like of me that makes the big ships go. I vowed then that I would turn to and learn something, that I would study navigation yet and have a ship of my own some day. But I didn't stick to it. I drifted here and drifted there, lost or spent my money the day after I got to port, and had to ship again in any berth I could.

"When I was here in New England I was always longing for a sight of palm trees, and the hot sandy beaches, and the brown people and their queer-built houses round the harbours at Singapore or Bankok or Bombay. But when I was there I was somehow always thinking of how our great, cool, grey rocks looked along this coast with the surf tumbling below and the pine covered hills behind them. I would remember the smell of bayberry and sweetbriar and mayflowers and think it would be the breath of life to me. So it was always, drifting first in one direction and then in another, until I came to port at last with less than I had when I put to sea. When I started out in life I was bound I would be a sea-captain before I was twenty: now that I am nearly four times that it hurts me still to

think that the chance is gone forever. It's a nice end for a man who once thought the sea was all his very own!"

"Was it hard to make up your mind to stay ashore?" asked Billy. He was watching the bank of clouds that had spread across the western sky and praying the Captain would keep on talking. The sun had begun to dip into the mass of heavy grey, and was sending up long shafts of red-gold light.

"It wasn't so bad the day the doctor told me that I could never go out of port again," Captain Saulsby said; "the hard life had done for me and the sharp sea winds had bitten so deep into my bones that I knew, long before he said so, that my usefulness was done. No, the end really came a year before when I found, all of a sudden, that the sailor I thought I was, the Ned Saulsby who could face any hardship, do any duty without faltering and without tiring, that he was gone as completely as though he had died.

"It was on the schooner *Mary Jameson,* bound out of Portland with lumber and coal. We had had fearful weather for three days out, blowing so hard that there was no peace or rest for any one. We were all dog-tired

and could have slept where we stood, but the wind was still up and it wasn't easy going yet. It was my watch and I was dropping with sleepiness and weariness, but so I had been many times before and it was part of being a good sailor to be able to keep awake. I stood peering and peering into the dark, my eyes trying to go shut, but my whole will set to keep them open. All of a sudden, as I stood there looking, I saw a full-rigged ship dead ahead of us, every sail spread out to the wind, her bow-wave slanting sharp out on each side from her cut-water, her wake showing clear in a white line of foam. She was so near I could see the men moving on her decks, could see her open hatchways and the flag flying from her main truck. We were right in line to ram her amidships; it seemed we couldn't miss her except by a miracle. I roared to the man at the wheel, "Port your helm, port your helm, put her hard over," and the schooner came about with a rush that almost capsized her. The captain ran up on deck, the men turned out of their bunks and came swarming up from below, all wanting to know what the matter was. I told them about the ship and turned to point her out—but she wasn't there! The



"Why," gasped Billy, "it must have been the *Flying Dutchman.*"

clouds parted just then and the moon came out, just to show that the sea was empty for miles on every side, and that old Ned Saulsby had been sleeping on watch. Of course if I had thought two seconds I would have known that never a ship on earth would have all sail set in such a wind as that, but I had not stopped to think."

"Why," gasped Billy, "it must have been the *Flying Dutchman.*"

"Some of the men whispered around that it might have been just that ship, but the captain knew better and so did I. It was only a dream and I had been asleep when I had no business to be, and if I had done it once I would do it again. If I had been young it would have been different, when lads aren't used to standing watch such a thing may happen and we know they'll learn better, but when an old sailor does it he can be sure of just one thing: his days at sea are near their end. I left the *Mary Jameson* at the next port, before the captain could turn me off. I knocked about for nearly a year, trying one berth and then another, falling lower and lower, and knowing I was failing in my duty whatever I tried to do. So at last I came limping into

the harbour of Appledore Island and I knew, when I stepped ashore, that I would never set sail again."

Captain Saulsby finished his story and shifted warily in his place. He glanced over his shoulder at the rising bank of clouds, but betrayed no surprise.

"I knew by the feel of the wind that some such thing was coming," he said calmly. "If somebody's going to pick us up in time they'll have to hurry a bit."

He made one or two efforts to talk further, but the pauses between his sentences became longer and longer. Billy suddenly realized that each had been trying to keep the other interested so that the ominous bank of clouds might go as long as possible unnoticed. He observed that the old sailor seemed very weary, that more than once his hands slipped from their hold and had to take a fresh grip. He tried to whistle to keep up the spirits of both of them, but the tune sounded high and queer and cracked, and he gave it up. At last Captain Saulsby broke silence suddenly.

"No one seems to be finding us," he said, "and we can't hold on forever. There's something I must tell you, in case you should be

able to last longer than I. That land of mine, you know, that Jarreth and the other fellow are trying to buy, well, they are not to have it. You will see to that, won't you?"

"You don't want to part with it?" asked Billy, not quite understanding.

"I don't want him to have it," the Captain repeated, "whether I—I get back to it or not. He doesn't want it for a good purpose. I've suspected that always, though I have never been sure enough to make an open report. I was a coward, I suppose, and was afraid of being laughed at. People won't believe there is a war within a thousand years of us, but I'm not taking any chances. There are no Germans going to settle down here, getting ready to help the Kaiser, the way they did for years across the water. They'll find their time wasted on the Island of Appledore. It's foggy a lot off this coast, the island is far out, there's a sheltered, hidden harbour, there where the mill stream comes out; they couldn't find a better place, they think, and so they're trying to buy it. Smugglers and even pirates, they say, used to make it their landing place, but it's worse rascals than either that want to use it now. Ned Saulsby has stood them off

so far, but he may have to leave the work to some one else."

His voice shook with a sudden earnestness that was startling.

"Promise me, Billy Wentworth," he said, "promise me that if you're the only one that comes to shore after this cruise, you'll see that land is safe whatever happens."

"I promise," Billy assured him, trembling with excitement at the rush of new, strange ideas that suddenly came tumbling into his mind; "but, Captain Saulsby, of course we're —we're going to come ashore together."

"You can't always tell, boy," the other answered, his very voice showing the weakness that was gradually overcoming his iron determination. "I'm not so young as sailormen sometimes are, and—even—the—young—ones —don't—always—hold—on—forever."

He collapsed sideways even as he spoke and would have pitched into the water had not Billy caught him. The wrench almost destroyed his own balance, but he managed somehow to cling to the centre-board and keep them both still upon the overturned boat.

It grew darker and darker, and the wide stretch of sea turned from blue to shadowy

grey as the twilight fell. Billy and the Captain talked no more, for every last ounce of strength was being put into the effort of clinging to the boat. The seas rose higher and snatched at them as they hung against the side, more than once it seemed that their hold must be torn loose. It became plain to the boy, as he clung determinedly, with one arm around the old man and one flung over the ridge of the keel, that the boat was growing heavier and more water-logged with every wave to which she rose, that their one support was slowly settling beneath them.

Captain Saulsby muttered something in his ear, but it was a moment before he could quite understand the half-whispered words.

"She's an old craft, and I'm her captain," he said, "it's the right way for a boat and her old skipper to go down. But you're young; it's a shame for you, Billy. You would have made a good sailor; that's the best I can say for any man."

He did not speak again, nor even try to move, he seemed to have lapsed practically into unconsciousness. Billy still clung to him and to the boat while his arms ached, then pricked and burned and finally became numb.

He felt so utterly exhausted that he thought he must give up, must drift off into quiet sleep and put an end to such hopeless effort. To rouse himself he began counting the stars overhead, the navigation stars whose names Captain Saulsby had taught him. There was Polaris, and there was Vega nearly overhead, and Altair, and there was Arcturus dipping toward the western horizon. While he watched, the orange gold of Arcturus was obscured by the rising clouds, then Altair was blotted out, now Vega, now the North Star and the shining Dipper. The boat began to plunge and roll, she could not last much longer now. He was too weary to care much whether she did or not.

He, too, must have fallen into unconsciousness for there was certainly an interval of which he knew nothing. Then a cold dash of water slapped in his face and roused him. He saw, almost above him, a black silhouette against the grey sky, the outline of a torpedo-boat making directly for them.

He felt only a lukewarm interest in the sudden vision, and wondered vaguely,

"Do they see us, or are they going to run us down?"

CHAPTER V

THE WAR GAME

To Billy it seemed as though he fell asleep very quietly and comfortably, as he clung to the cat-boat with the water breaking over him, and that he awoke, aching and miserable, to the wish that he had been left where he was. As more of his wits returned to him, however, he realized that it was a little pleasanter to be warm and dry and lying in a berth in a brightly-lighted room than left to drown in the disagreeably cold Atlantic.

Some one was lifting him up to pour a hot stinging drink down his throat; he gulped and choked and did not enjoy it. He tried to look around to see who was treating him with such unkindness but found it too great an effort. Some one else was leaning over him. He realized after listening to the talk for a moment that this was the ship's captain. He remembered quickly Captain Saulsby's last in-

junction and, with a great exertion managed to speak.

"That land on Appledore Island," he began unsteadily. "Captain Saulsby's land—some one wants to buy it—some one who isn't square —you must see about it."

He did not seem to be making himself very clear, and stopped to rest.

"What's the boy talking about?" the Captain said, clearly puzzled. "Is he out of his head?"

"He sounds so but perhaps he isn't," the other answered; "he seems to be trying very hard to tell you something. Here, take this."

Billy swallowed a second dose of the detestable drink and under its reviving influence made another attempt. This time he succeeded better and seemed almost to make the Captain understand what he was trying to explain. The endeavour wearied him greatly, however, and he lay back in his berth feeling quite worn out and very drowsy.

"We'll let him sleep a while now," the officer said; "that, I think, is really all he needs. He's a husky youngster and won't suffer much from his ducking. I'm not so certain about the old fellow who was with him."

Billy was asleep almost before they had reached the door. When he awoke again he certainly felt much better, though stiff and sore and uncomfortable still. A smiling colored boy in a white jacket was sitting by his berth, put there for the special purpose, it seemed, of catching him when he rolled over the edge, which he did immediately.

The wind had risen and the torpedo-boat that had picked them up was pitching and tossing as only a torpedo-boat knows the art. Everything in the room danced and rattled and Billy was obliged to brace himself with both arms to keep from being thrown out of his berth again and again. He asked between pitches for Captain Saulsby and was assured that all was well with the old sailor and that he was "coming around fine."

Vigorous health is a strong resister even of the after effects of trying to drown, so it was not long before Billy was able to sit up, then to step gingerly down from his rocking berth and try a few unsteady steps across the floor. After that the room became rapidly too small to hold him and he was seized with a devouring curiosity to inspect the ship. He was taken first to see Captain Saulsby, who had

been conscious and quite cheery, they told him, and had now dropped off into a comfortable sleep. A friendly blue-jacket who had also come to ask after the captain's welfare, took Billy under his care, and offered to conduct him up on deck. Once there, however, the sailor was called away by a sudden order, leaving his charge clinging to the rail and wondering just where they were going and what they were doing. Clouds of salt spray swept the length of the ship, making him duck and gasp and grin, but he would not have gone below again for anything on earth.

The night was pitch black now and stormy, with gusts of wind and rain, the ship seemed to be taking an aimless course, running generally southward from Appledore Island but moving now here, now there, sometimes at half speed, sometimes as swiftly as her big engines could drive her. Presently his new friend was able to return to his side and to explain a little more of what they were about.

"We're playing the war game," he said, "and our orders just now are to look for submarines. The only sign of one we have found so far was your little craft, and a pretty model of a submarine she was trying to make of her-

self. There's one of the big battleships has got away from the rest of the fleet, and we have orders to look for her, too; but there's not much likelihood of her being in these parts. We'll sink her if we can get the chance though; I wish we could."

"But—but—you don't really sink her?" Billy asked, not willing to show his ignorance, but far too curious to keep quiet.

"Oh, no; we get up as close as we dare and send up a signal to show that we could sink her and that it is to be counted on the record for us. But if she finds us with her search-lights before we can fire, and if we're close enough to be smashed by her guns, then we are destroyed and a mad lot we are, I can tell you."

It might have sounded like a foolish pastime to Billy when he was ashore, but here in the wind and the dark, with the ship rushing forward at full speed and with every one aboard her straining to do his part to the uttermost, the war game seemed most thrillingly in earnest. He too hung over the rail and watched the long beam of light swing in searching circles, he peered through the dark for the periscope of a submarine until his eyes

ached and was as disappointed as anybody when no such discovery was made. Time passed and nothing was to be seen but a waste of angry, tossing water; so the lights were finally covered and the destroyer turned to pursue a steady course northward.

Billy never quite knew by just what process he came finally to be on the bridge. He was aware that it was absolutely against all rules for him to go there, but such a force of curiosity drew him thither that it did not seem possible to resist. By slipping silently from one inconspicuous place to another, by lounging carelessly against the rail whenever an officer chanced to pass and by speeding across the deck the moment his back was turned, he finally came closer and closer to the desired spot, ventured a cautious foot upon one of the steps and then another, and all at once was safely curled up in a corner of dense shadow within the sacred limits of the forbidden place.

The Captain was walking slowly up and down, talking to one of the officers, passing every now and then so close that he almost brushed Billy's elbow. In the gleam of one of the hooded lights, he could sometimes catch the glistening of the water on their wet

coats, or the shine of the younger officer's bright red hair.

"That's a queer pair we picked up," the Captain was saying as they passed. "I went down to see how they were getting on and found the boy all worked up about some scheme that he claims is being hatched on Appledore Island. He says that the old sailor wants it reported, and may be too far gone to do it himself, but he isn't very clear as to just what the trouble is. The best I can make out seems to be that there is an effort being made to buy this man Saulsby's land, and that he is sure there is German influence backing it, with a view to getting ready a possible base of supplies in case of war."

"One hears of such things having gone on for years abroad, before the German trouble cut loose," said the other, "but the boy may not have known what he was talking about. He had been hanging to that boat four or five hours and that doesn't tend to clear the brain."

"Well," said the Captain, "I'm not very sure myself, but I may plan to look into the matter without telling him so. The harbour he speaks of is at the northwest end—"

They moved out of hearing, and Billy took

the opportunity to stretch his cramped knees and shift his uneasy position before they should come back again. He was heartily ashamed of being there, eavesdropping but—well, one does not get into the war game often. When he was passed again, he realized from the voices that the Captain had gone below and that two of the younger officers were talking.

"I wish we could have found some of those submarines," one was saying, "especially with the manœvres so nearly over. Our orders to end by fetching a compass round the whole fleet make it almost certain that we will be caught ourselves, so it does seem as though we might have got something."

"Yes," said the other. "I believe if I could only fire off that torpedo rocket to tell one of those uppety submarine commanders he is sunk, I would be the happiest man in Uncle Sam's Navy. There's no hope now of our finding that battleship either."

The destroyer sped on through the rain and the dark, the two officers stood silently at their posts and Billy curled up closer in his corner, soaked and cramped and aching and happy. He thought a moment of that boy who had

walked up the path between Captain Saulsby's bent, old willow trees, a sullen boy who had sniffed the salt breeze disdainfully and vowed that he did not like it. That was some entirely different person whose name might have happened to be Billy Wentworth, but who had nothing whatever in common with the boy he was now. He closed his eyes as he was thinking it over, and even might have dozed a little until a sudden exclamation from the nearest officer startled him into alert attention. The rapid volley of excited orders that followed told him at once that something unusual must have occurred, and, forgetting all caution in his eager interest, he stood upright that he might watch the better. It seemed as though he saw a looming bulk in the blackness ahead of them, as though he actually heard a voice speaking somewhere beyond there in the dark. Then, all in a breath, a myriad of electric lights went on and there sprang into form the outline of a huge battleship, right across their bows. She seemed to tower above them like a mountain, enormous, massive, moving at no very great speed, but inexorably as though there were no hope of her swerving or checking her course.

The little destroyer ducked and plunged as she came hard over, she caught the big bow wave and floundered for a second but nevertheless pressed manfully on. They were cutting under the big dreadnaught's bows, they were bound to be rammed amidships at least; no, it would be nearer the stern. Oh, wonder of wonders, they were going to win clear. It seemed to Billy, as he clung to the rail, that he could almost have stretched out his hand and touched the vessel's vast steel side as they went by. He heard some one near him laugh out loud in pure, joyful excitement and he saw that it was the commander of the destroyer, himself, who seized the pistol and fired the signal rocket. Up it went in a flaming stream, directly over the dreadnaught's bridge, described a crimson arch above the heads of the startled officers and dropped on the other side. On both vessels there could be no shadow of a doubt that a desperate night attack had been successfully made and that according to all the rules of the war game the battleship *New Mexico* had gone to the bottom with all on board.

For Billy, who was as full of thrills as any of the rest, who hung forward to watch with

all his eyes lest he should miss something, there was a separate passage of the adventure that was all his own. For as the ship's searchlights slanted down upon them a moment too late, cutting a wide, white circle upon the water, they showed him a most unexpected sight. There, bobbing serenely on the waves, her sails drooping and a little bedraggled as though she were very tired, but her gay red pennant fluttering bravely still, rode the little craft that had been the cause of all his adventures. There could surely be no doubt that it was the *Josephine*. A moment she sailed serenely alongside, then the roar of foaming water from under the destroyer's bow reached out and caught her. She staggered, careened, rose boldly on the summit of a wave, then sank. She had sailed far and carried calamity in her wake, but she made a brave end and went down with colours flying.

His excitement in watching the *Josephine* was most rudely interrupted by the discovery by the young officer that there was some one on the bridge who had no business to be there. Just what was said to him, Billy preferred afterwards not to remember. He was bundled down the steps with far more haste than cere-

mony, and presently found himself, much chastened and subdued, back in charge of his friend, the bluejacket. Even then he refused to be taken below, for the destroyer was now coming into the zone where she must make the perilous passage through the whole fleet, and he was bound that he would not lose one breathless instant.

The wind had dropped a little and the sea was growing quieter. The torpedo-boat checked her speed and moved forward more slowly and almost without a sound. There was nothing, Billy thought, but a waste of empty water and starless sky, but wait, what was that darker shape showing vaguely through the gloom? Presently he was aware that it was a ship, and another one beyond, and another and another, vessels on every hand lying in wait, hostile and threatening. The destroyer crept onward, feeling her way, altering her course every now and again to avoid some man-of-war swinging at anchor ahead of her. Far off on the horizon there shone out a twinkle of lights and the beam of a searchlight was lifted to the sky.

"The rest of the torpedo-boat flotilla is coming in, too," said the sailor at his side, chuck-

ling gleefully. "That fellow over there has been caught slipping by, but it wasn't us."

Suddenly their vessel gathered speed and shot away with her engines crowded to every pound of steam. She had passed the danger lines and had only to put a safe distance between herself and the battleship fleet. The watchers on the nearest vessel must have heard the hum of her machinery or the rush of water from her bow, for immediately lights flared up, seeming to spread from ship to ship, straight gleaming, groping fingers flashed back and forth, signalling, hunting and questioning. Billy, looking back, seemed to see the whole sky an interwoven maze of shafts of light as every warship searched for her enemy. One long beam swung toward them in a wide, sweeping curve, approached, almost touched them, but just missed, leaving them safe to speed away into the safety of the darkness.

"It's twelve o'clock, and the war game's over," said the sailor at his side, "and I believe our old boat has made a pretty good record after all. Now you're to come below and turn in, young man, or you'll surely be a dead boy in the morning."

The novelty of sleeping in a sailor's ham-

mock was quite lost on Billy, for he was deep in slumber almost before he could clamber in. He was nevertheless uneasily conscious, even through the heaviest of his repose, of the swinging and bumping that attended his slumbers. He thought he must be still dreaming when some one shook him by the arm.

"It's a shame to waken such a sleepy boy," said his friend, the blue-jacket, "but there's something here you don't want to miss seeing."

Billy would have been willing to miss anything, he thought, until he had stumbled out of his hammock, rubbed the sleep from his eyes and looked where his companion pointed.

It was morning, cold, cloudy, windless morning, but still with light enough to see. One by one the ships were leaving their anchorage and moving away in long procession, huge dreadnaughts, swift cruisers, torpedo boats and submarines. In endless line they seemed to pass, stately and grey and silent in the dawn. Billy, his teeth chattering with chill and excitement, his bones still aching from the misadventures of the past hours, clung to his friend's arm and looked and looked as though he could not see enough.

Never before had he had an idea of what

the Navy really was. He had seen photographs upon a printed page, or pictures on the movie screen, but had never even guessed from them how a man-of-war would impress him in reality. For the big grey battleships suddenly seemed to stand for many things, for the greatness of the country they guarded, for the power of the engines that drove them, the faithfulness and loyalty of the service that guided them and lastly—here an extra quiver ran through his shivering body—for the might of the enemy they would some day go forth to meet.

CHAPTER VI

THE EBBING OF THE TIDE

SINCE the destroyer had other orders, Billy and Captain Saulsby were transferred to a ship that was to put in toward Appledore Island and pick up the two officers who had been left there for shore observations. Billy observed the captains of the two vessels talking very earnestly together, and that afterwards they strolled down the deck to have what seemed a casual chat with Captain Saulsby. He, himself, however, was too busy seeing and hearing new things to pay much attention to what was going forward. He was taken down to see the ship's engines, and stood gazing at them in dumb awe, feeling much as though he were an ant staring at the shining mechanism of a repeater watch.

They went ashore, finally, in the ship's motor launch and were landed in the little harbour below the old mill. Billy had thought that the place had been chosen as the best spot

to leave Captain Saulsby, since it was nearest his house; he was somewhat surprised, therefore, to see two of the bluejackets disembark with them, and send the launch back to the ship.

"We were to meet the two officers here," one of them explained, "and I had written orders to give them from the Captain. We saw them signal from here that they would be waiting: I can't understand why we don't find them. I will just have to go around to the hotel with the orders, I suppose, and see if I can find them there."

"Come with us, then," said Billy, "and I will show you the short way. It is only a few minutes' walk to Captain Saulsby's, and won't take you any time to go on to the hotel."

He proved to be wrong, however, in more than one particular. It was a good half hour before they were able to get Captain Saulsby even the short distance down to the edge of the mill-stream. Although protesting loudly that he had suffered no harm from yesterday's mishap and that such an adventure was nothing to an old sailor like himself, the Captain was, nevertheless, unable to hide the fact that he was thoroughly spent and ill. Even with a

strong arm to help him on each side, he was hardly able to struggle along the path. His protests that there was nothing wrong, nothing wrong at all, became ever louder and more incoherent until it was plain to all three of his companions that he was rapidly growing lightheaded.

When they came to the causeway, moreover, they discovered a fact that Billy, in his ignorance of the ocean's ways, had failed to count upon. The tide was at the wrong stage, and the water too deep over the stepping stones to permit of a safe passage across.

"What a nuisance," exclaimed Billy, utterly exasperated both with the forces of nature and with himself, "how could I have been so stupid as to forget!"

"If we only hadn't sent the launch back!" remarked the sailor. "But our orders were she was not to wait at all. I don't understand myself what the whole thing is about, but I suppose the captain does."

"We'll have to go around by the road," the other said, "but there's one thing sure, the old man can't make it that far."

It was very plain that Captain Saulsby had dragged himself as far as he could, for he

stood swaying and would have fallen. Between them the two sturdy bluejackets carried him up the beach and laid him down under a tree. He seemed to be only vaguely conscious of where he was, and lay there muttering and talking to himself.

"It was the feel of the blue water under me that kept me going," he explained pathetically in a moment of being more himself; "once I get on land you find out what I am, a battered old derelict good for nothing but to make trouble."

"Is there somewhere near where we can leave him?" one of the sailors asked. "It looks as though it might rain and he ought to be under cover. We can send you back some one to drive him home, but we had better not wait now; our orders were to hurry. Isn't there a house near?"

"There's the old mill," Billy recollected suddenly; "that will keep us dry at least and we can wait there for some one to come for us. I don't think it is too far to carry him."

Only the iron muscles trained in Uncle Sam's navy could have managed such a huge, awkward burden as Captain Saulsby proved to be. He objected loudly and even struggled

against being carried, so that all three of his friends were well worn out by the time they had deposited him in the big, cool, shadowy room that formed the first story of the mill. Billy went out on the steps to thank the men and to give them directions as to how to find the hotel.

"You follow the wood road until you come to the main highway," he told them, "and then go straight down that until you come to the bridge. It's pretty far, but you can't lose the way."

"We'll make time by walking," returned the sailor; "the water won't be down off that causeway until after two and it would be no good trying to cross it with such a tide running. We'll be sure to send you help."

"There's a better way than that," exclaimed Billy; "I can go up the lane to the Shutes' and get them to help me. That will be quicker than waiting for you to send some one. I should have thought of that before."

The two men walked off down the sun-flecked road, and Billy stood for a minute watching them go. It was a warm and pleasant day, with birds singing, and big white clouds blowing across such patches of sky as

he could see above the trees. It was nearly noon; everything was very still and peaceful; there might be a little threat of rain in some of those bigger clouds, but certainly nothing more than a passing shower. Why should he have such a feeling of vague uneasiness, of danger; a queer unrest as though he must get ready for something that was about to happen? Why should he feel such regret that the two men were getting farther and farther away? Why must he try hard to stifle the impulse to run after and call them back? He did not know.

He turned at last and went into the mill, and over to where the sailors had laid the old captain down. He remembered that wide bench under the little window; he and Sally had sat upon it, but certainly he did not recollect that it had been covered with a blanket. There were some papers lying on the dusty table too; he might have not seen them, but a puff of wind came through the broken windowpane and scattered them across the floor. He gathered them up, but found that nearly all were blank; only the three uppermost ones had any lines of writing. They were penned in an odd hand, very small and with innumer-

able curves and flourishes; the words, even the letters belonged to a foreign language. Billy felt that he ought to recognize it, but in the half-light of the big room could not make it out. The dust was thick upon the pages, so they must have been there some time; most probably he had merely failed to notice them when he had been there before.

Captain Saulsby was less restless now than he had been, and seemed to be growing quieter and more contented, even drowsy. Billy thought that he had better wait a little before he set out for the Shutes', that it would be better to let the old man fall asleep so that he might not know he was being left alone. He sat down upon the floor to wait until the Captain should drop off.

It did not seem at all unpleasant to be resting a little for, oh, Heavens, how tired he was! He was still sore and aching from his hours in the water; he had not slept so very long during the night; the very excitement and novelty that had kept him up so far, had worn him out and made his present exhaustion more complete. He thought it would do no harm if he just lay down, with his coat rolled up for a pillow, perhaps it might make the cap-

tain feel more like going to sleep. He was not going to shut his eyes; oh, no; he was just going to take the time at last to think over all the things that had happened in twenty-four hours. Only think, yesterday at this time he and Captain Saulsby had sat at the door putting the finishing touches to the *Josephine*. No, it could not have been yesterday; it must have been last week. A wasp was buzzing in the window; it seemed very loud, but finally became fainter as though it were moving away —very—far—away.

A dead boy could not have slept more heavily than did Billy on the hard floor of the old mill. The wind rose and rain struck, pattering, against the windows, a door closed somewhere, perhaps not merely by the force of the wind. Captain Saulsby stirred in his sleep and groaned out loud, but still the weary boy slept on. The far-off rumble of some warship at target practice came faintly on the wind—it had no power to waken him. It was not until hours had gone by, not until one shower had passed and then another, and even the second one had cleared away; not until the boisterous wind had caught one of the heavy shutters and slammed it to with a crash,

that Billy sat up with a start and rubbed his eyes.

The sun-light had been showing in a sharp bar across the sill of the eastern window when he fell asleep; it was slanting almost level through the western one when he awoke. The shadows on the floor were long and black, the whole place was beginning to be grey and dim. He could not believe that he had slept so long, but everything about him gave undoubted proof. He ran out and down the path to the edge of the creek, and saw, alas, just what he had feared. While he had been sleeping, the precious moment had passed, the tide had gone out and come in again, the causeway was covered and would offer no chance of safe passage until morning.

"Oh, how could I, how *could* I?" he kept saying over and over to himself, although it was easy enough to see how he could. After his long sleep upon the hard floor every inch of him seemed to have its separate pain; he felt as though each move must make him cry aloud. He could hardly make his way back up the path to the mill, but make it he must for there was now much to be done, and in haste.

Captain Saulsby was still asleep when he came back, a most alarming sleep, he thought, never having seen such a dead, heavy stupor before. Wrong as it seemed to leave the old man alone, it seemed worse to wait longer without doing anything, so Billy decided to set off for the Shutes' at once. Sally's father or mother would certainly come back with him and would arrange for some way of taking the Captain to his own house. He put on his coat and went out hurriedly. He was glad to get out into the last of the sunshine; he somehow did not like the feeling of that place inside.

The way to Sally Shute's had seemed pleasant enough the day he had walked it with her two weeks ago. But now it was quite different; the tall pine-trunks looked stiff and forbidding, the slender white Indian pipes, pale and ghostly in the dense shadows. Very little sunshine filtered down through the heavy branches, and presently even that was gone. He walked quickly; then, he hardly knew why, began to run.

It was a most breathless, tired boy that arrived finally at the end of the lane and ran across the Shutes' garden. He stepped on

some of Mrs. Shute's precious purple geraniums but he could not stop to go around them. The house had a silent, shut-up air that made his heart go down the moment he looked at it. Suppose they were all away; suppose there was no help to be had! He jangled loudly at the big bell, then, almost before it had stopped vibrating, jangled loudly and impatiently again. There was absolute silence inside at first; then, oh, what a relief; footsteps could be heard coming down the stairs, along the hall; there was an irritating pause as some one fumbled at the lock. The door opened and Billy made no attempt to restrain a shout of delight, for there stood Sally.

Sally Shute with her round cheeks and her fat yellow braids and her pink gingham dress looked a very real and wholesome person after all the half-seen terrors and half-felt dangers that had seemed to be around him. Still standing on the doorstep he began hastily to tell her all about what had happened and had got nearly half-way through his tale before she interrupted him.

"Come in," she ordered, "and begin again and tell me that all over. I have not under-

stood one word of what you are talking about."

She took him out into the kitchen, such a warm, bright, cheerful place that he felt his spirits reviving at once.

"Sit down there," she said, pointing to the red-covered table, "and now tell me how long it is since you had anything to eat."

Billy had breakfasted on the ship, but that had been exceedingly early, and he had eaten nothing since. That, he thought, must be part of what made him feel so queer. Sally flatly refused to let him talk any more until he had begun his supper.

"You can tell me about it while you are eating, even if you have to speak with your mouth full," she said. "It seems as though Captain Saulsby was sick and you want me to go somewhere with you, so I'll have to be getting things together anyway. There won't be any time wasted."

"Aren't your father and mother here?" asked Billy anxiously.

"No; they took Jacky and went over to the mainland on the afternoon boat, and won't be back tonight. There's no one here but my

grandmother, and she is lame and deaf, so she can't go with us. Don't worry though; I'll know what to do."

It was queer about Sally, how calm she always was. Perhaps she had less imagination than other children and so was not apt to be aroused by the thought of dangerous possibilities. The thing directly before her was always the one thing that Sally saw, saw it clearly and fully and knew just what she was going to do about it.

By the time Billy had finished eating, she was not only in full possession of his story, but had put on her coat, had got ready a large bundle and a basket and had explained as much of the situation to her grandmother as spasmodic shouting could accomplish.

"Eh, eh," said the old lady, "I understand," although it was very doubtful if she did.

They set out together down the lane, Billy feeling much cheered now that he had some notion of what they were to do. Capable Sally's experience evidently included just such a situation as this, for people had been ship-wrecked before off Appledore Island, and she had helped to care for them after-

ward. She chattered gaily as she trotted by his side, and made many matter-of-fact comments on the adventures through which he had passed.

"I thought your clothes looked as though you had been doing something dreadful to them," she said; "I am afraid they will never be good for anything again."

Billy did cut rather a sorry figure for he had been wet and dried and wet and dried again, before his long nap on the dusty floor. He thought little of that, however, but hurried Sally forward through the gathering twilight until they reached the old mill.

It was almost completely dark inside, and felt damp and chilly. Sally had had the forethought to bring candles and matches and, under her instructions, Billy soon had a fire burning in the old fireplace. She bent over Captain Saulsby, who was still lying in the same deep-breathing stupor, and frowned and shook her head.

"He's too old for such adventures," was her comment. "I don't like it."

They heated some water at the fire and mixed a hot drink for the old man which he roused himself enough to swallow. They

covered him with warm blankets and rubbed at his cold hands.

"Now try to lift him up a little," she ordered, "while I get this pillow under his head. That is right, now—Billy, what is that?"

For the absolute silence of the empty mill had been broken by a sound. Above their heads was heard the creak of a board, then the muffled noise of a quiet footfall and the scraping of rusty hinges as a door was stealthily opened.

CHAPTER VII

MIST AND MOONLIGHT

THE two stood looking at each other for a full minute, both as still as mice.

"Did you hear it?" Sally asked at last in a startled whisper, and, "I did, didn't you?" Billy returned.

They listened and listened but there was no repetition of the sound upstairs. It might have been a mistake, it might have been—oh, anything. The silence was so complete that Billy could hear the blood throbbing in his ears and the faint squeak of a board under Sally's foot as she shifted her position. A little bright-eyed mouse peeped out of a corner and, deceived by the quiet, thought the way was safe for an excursion across the wide, dusty floor. It was quite in the centre of the room before it discovered that it was in the dreaded presence of human beings, turned, and went scampering back to its hole again. Quite in

accord with her usual calm, Sally stared after it and minded its presence not at all. In fact she drew a comforting explanation from the intrusion.

"I believe it was just rats or mice upstairs," she said; "the noise they make often does sound like people moving about. I don't really believe it was anything at all."

Billy looked up at the long flight of rickety stairs that led from the room they were in to the closed door on the floor above. Could any one be up there, was it that door that had moved a little on its rusty hinges, was some one peering at them even now? He could not be sure and, if the truth be told, he had no very great desire to go up and find out. He thought, after all, that Sally's explanation was the most comfortable one to believe.

There was not very much chance to think further of the matter just then for Captain Saulsby began to occupy all their attention. He roused himself from the strange stupor into which he had fallen, and seemed for a time to be really better. Sally even persuaded him to drink some of the broth that she had brought with her, and had heated before the fire. After he had swallowed it

down, with some reluctance and by dint of much persuading, the old sailor sat up and seemed lively and talkative and almost himself again.

The two did not tell him of the sound they had heard upstairs, but let him talk of their adventure in the cat-boat, of the destroyer, of the ungrateful behaviour of the runaway *Josephine*. Occasionally his thoughts would wander a little and he would begin telling of some adventure long past; he went back more than once to the night when he had fallen asleep on watch and thought that he had seen a ship. He would bring himself back with a jerk and look at them wonderingly as though he did not quite understand, himself, how his ideas had become confused. Sally made him comfortable by moving the bench into a corner by the fire, whose warmth felt pleasant enough, even to the children, since the air in the old, closed-up mill seemed to grow even more damp and chilly as the night advanced. Billy pulled out the broken arm-chair for Sally, and she sat down in it gratefully, for she was weary with much trotting back and forth. She answered Captain Saulsby now and again when he paused in his rambling talk, but

finally began to speak only at longer and longer intervals. Billy sat opposite on the uncomfortable stool; he propped his head against the chimney piece for a little rest; he did not feel sleepy, but he too was very tired. He watched Sally's yellow head nod once or twice, he saw her eyelids grow heavier and heavier until at last they closed. She leaned sideways against the arm of the chair, heaved a long drowsy sigh and fell fast asleep.

Captain Saulsby did not seem in the least sleepy, but talked on and on, the thread of his conversation becoming ever more difficult to follow. His mind had dropped away entirely into the past; he talked of Singapore now, and of hot still nights on the Indian ocean, or of the restless, choppy tossing of the China Sea. Billy's own thoughts wandered farther and farther away, pondering on questions of his own, the sound of the Captain's voice becoming vague in his ears. He wondered dimly why the bluejackets had not come back; perhaps they had been picked up at the other landing place and had returned to the ship. He had assured them so earnestly that he could get assistance at Sally's house that probably they had not thought of him again. When he

found that the Shutes were away maybe he ought to have gone off at once by the road to get help. But no, that would have left Sally there alone for too long; it would not have been safe, especially with that possibility of something or somebody upstairs. Why, oh, why, had he slept through the ebb tide? That was what had caused all the trouble. His mind drifted further, to his mother and father in South America, and how much he would have to tell them when they got home. It would be more interesting to relate his tale to them than to Aunt Mattie, although she was proving to be rather a good sort, too. He liked Aunt Mattie; he would not have called her "an old-maid aunt" again for anything. How lucky it was she had gone to Boston and was not aware of any of his adventures. He watched the faint moonlight move across the floor, disappear and come into view again; he thought of Johann Happs and his broken clock, and wondered again about the man who had frightened him so. Dear, dear, but this was a long night; would it ever end? He rose at last, walked stiffly over to mend the dying fire and then, going to the door, stood for a little peering out.

A heavy fog was rolling in from the sea, but it seemed to cling to the ground and not to be able to rise very high. The trees and bushes stood knee deep in the thick white mist, with the moonlight still turning the topmost branches to silver. He felt sure that some hours must have gone by, that it must be after midnight, perhaps nearly morning. A light touch on his arm told him that Sally was awake and had come to stand beside him.

"I am so stiff," he whispered softly, "that I will have to go out and walk up and down a little or I will never be able to move again."

Sally nodded.

"It will do you good," she answered, also in a whisper, "and the Captain is quiet now."

Billy glanced toward the old sailor and somehow felt more alarmed about him than ever before. He was silent, but not asleep; his eyes were half-closed and he seemed quite unconscious of their presence. His breathing had grown weak and uneven. Sally went over to him; if she felt the same anxiety that Billy did, she managed not to show it.

"Go on," she ordered, under her breath; "it will be good for you."

He wondered if perhaps the tide were not

down now and the water shallow enough for him to cross the stepping stones. Once beyond the mill creek he could get help so quickly that perhaps his two companions might not even know that he had gone.

To spend such a night as he had, to follow it by sleeping all afternoon on a bare floor, and then sit up on a three-legged stool for half the next night, seemed to make one feel a little queer. He tramped down the path briskly to get the stiffness out of his legs, then turned to look back at the mill to make sure Sally was safe. There was a feeble, flickering light in the lower windows, that was from their fire, and the candle that burned on the mantel shelf. But—

"Is that moonlight?" wondered Billy, as he caught a faint glimmer from one of the panes in a window above.

It might have been moonlight reflected on the glass but he could not be sure. He went back to make certain but could not for the life of him decide. There were outside stairs, so steep as to be practically a ladder, that went up to the top of the mill. The steps led very close past the window at which he was looking and at which he continued to stare for

some minutes while he made up his mind to something.

"After all," he concluded at last, almost speaking his thought aloud, "there is not the least harm in going up to see."

He stepped upon the stairs as quietly as a cat, so that Sally and the Captain need not be disturbed. The main door to the mill faced the sea, and this he had left open. The steps slanted across the wide, blank wall and passed close below the largest window that also gave upon the sea. As Billy climbed higher and higher he realized what a good lookout the place would make.

The stairs outside were even more unsteady and decayed than was the staircase within, yet they held under his weight. Billy trod gingerly but progressed steadily upward in as complete silence as he could manage. Once or twice a rotten board creaked under his foot, but only faintly. He came nearer and nearer to the window and finally laid his hand upon the sill. He discovered that the sash was pushed half way up and propped with a stick. There was not the slightest glimmer of light inside.

"Now," he thought, "if the window was up,

could the glass above have reflected the moonlight?"

It was a difficult problem to decide, but at last he made up his mind that it could. He listened a long, long time but he did not hear a sound within, not a rustle, not a breath. It was so dark that even after his eyes got used to the blackness, and after he had lifted himself up to peer boldly over the sill, he could spy nothing but vague bulky shapes like boxes or furniture.

"There is surely no one there," he decided; "there isn't a person in the world who knows how to keep so still as that. There hasn't been any one there for twenty years."

He let himself down from the sill with far less care than he had exercised in pulling himself up. One of his hands slipped a little, and he shifted it quickly along the ledge to get a better hold. As he did so his fingers touched something that lay upon the sill; it dropped, struck one of the steps below him and bounded to one side, then fell with a thud upon the grass beneath. He ran down the ladder quickly and felt about on the ground until he found it. A pair of field glasses it proved to be, quite undoubtedly the

same ones that he had picked up once before upon the rocks by the willow-trees.

"No one there for twenty years?" he repeated to himself. His fingers, slipping over the cool metal and the leather covering, assured him that the glasses were not even dusty.

He had to sit down upon the grass, in order to reflect upon this problem long and earnestly.

"There has been some one there lately," he thought, "but there can't be any one now; there *can't*. Nothing alive could possibly keep so quiet; why, I could have heard even a mouse breathe."

He was thoroughly convinced that his intent listening could not have played him false and that he must have been mistaken about seeing a light. His reassured thoughts, therefore, went back once more to Sally and Captain Saulsby. Suppose it was so near morning that the tide would be down again; suppose he ran across the causeway for help and got back within half-an-hour, long before Sally could get uneasy. That surely was the best thing to do. The truth was that the old sailor's condition had filled him with real terror. The creaking upstairs, the field-glasses, the suspicion of a light, all these might

puzzle him, but the state of the Captain made him actually afraid. He felt that whatever was to be done must be accomplished at once.

He ran down to the shore, along the rough, over-grown path. It was only a few yards to the beach, but a little longer around the shore to the stream and the place where the stepping stones crossed. He could see by the mist-obscured moonlight that the tide had come in and was going out again and that the water was still running over the causeway.

"It can't be so very deep," he thought, and taking off his coat and hanging his shoes about his neck, he waded cautiously into the stream. Up to his knees, his waist, his arms, it rose; one step more and it would be up to his neck.

"I will have to swim it," he said to himself, and even at that moment he was swept off his feet and borne struggling into the deeper water. He had wondered a little earlier in the day why the bluejackets had not swum across instead of going around that long, hot way by the road. It came to him now in a sudden flash that seasoned sailors knew more about the tide currents than did boys, that he had done an inexcusably foolish thing. He swam with all his strength, wildly at first; he

sank, came up, and struck out again. He was at first angry to find he had no hope of reaching the other shore; then his anger turned quickly to a single thought—could he possibly struggle back to land again? So weary was he with all he had recently been through, that he found suddenly his strength was going. He realized that the current, firmly and surely, was bearing him down to the mouth of the stream and carrying him out to sea, to be lost in the tossing waves and the blanket of heavy fog, yet he could make scarcely an effort to save himself.

He remembered suddenly that no one would have the faintest idea what had become of him, that Sally would search for him everywhere, would call and call in vain, for he would have apparently vanished from the face of the earth. She would be left alone there with a helpless delirious man, and with Heaven knew what lurking terrors in the dark old mill. The thought gave him strength to put every last atom of energy into one final endeavour and to struggle free of the current just as it was sweeping him past the last point of rocks. He felt the force of the tide abate a little, then he drifted into an eddy and came

quietly to shore on a bit of gravel beach.

For a long time he lay panting and exhausted, making no effort to move. It seemed as though he would never get his lungs full of air again, so completely had he spent both his breath and his strength. At last he sat up, discovered to his surprise that he was still half in the water, crawled up the bank and began trying to wring out his dripping clothes.

"I don't think there is much fun in adventures that you have all alone," was the grave comment that he made to himself as he stumbled up the beach.

"Now, just what can I tell Sally?" he was thinking further when Sally's own voice interrupted him. He heard her quick feet coming down the path and heard her voice, raised high in real terror, crying,

"Billy—Billy Wentworth!"

He ran up through the bushes and met her as she came flying toward him through the mist.

"Come quick," she cried; "come quick. It's Captain Saulsby. I—I, oh, Billy, I'm so frightened!"

Together they sped back up the path to the

mill, tripping over roots, stumbling on the moss-covered stones, gasping in their terrified haste. As they came near Billy heard a strange sound, the Captain's voice surely, but high and queer and cracked, shouting out what must have been meant for a song of the sea. He went up the steps in one breathless leap and came inside the mill.

Captain Saulsby was in the middle of the room, lurching and staggering as he tried to walk, waving his arms and shouting as loud as his broken old voice would let him. Billy ran to him and tried to lead him back to the bench, but was shaken off with a quite unexpected force.

"Let me go," he cried; "don't keep me back; they all want to keep me back. Do they think I'll stay below when it's my watch?"

He staggered a step forward, swayed and collapsed upon the floor in a heap.

Somehow they got him back upon the bench and Sally tucked him in with the blankets and pillows she had brought. Yet the moment his strength revived he was struggling to get up again, shouting and raging at them both. Billy held him down with all his strength but was scarcely able to keep him quiet. At last

the old man's excitement seemed to die down a little and he lay still, apparently quite exhausted. He kept repeating, however, what he had been shouting a moment before.

"It's my watch," he insisted over and over in a broken whisper. "Let me go, it's my watch."

He lay quiet finally, and Billy and Sally, both quite worn out, leaned limply against either side of the bench.

"Will this horrible night ever end?" thought Billy. "Is there anything left now that can still happen?"

It seemed almost in answer to his unspoken words that there came again a noise above them. It was no faint creaking this time, but the unmistakable sound of running feet, the banging of a door and the slam of a window thrown suddenly wide open. There was a loud shout in the wood outside to the right of them, it was answered immediately by a second, this time from the left, and there was a heavy rustling and crashing as of somebody running at headlong speed through the underbrush. There was a quick, breathless silence, then, above them, the sound of a sharp metallic click.

Sally got up, marched to the fireplace and took down the candle that burned on the mantel.

"I can't stand it any longer," she said firmly; "I'm going to see who's up there."

"No, no," cried Billy, "you shan't; you mustn't. If you have to find out, I am the one to go."

"You can't go," she returned briefly. "Captain Saulsby will lie still for you, but I can't do anything with him. You can't leave him."

This was so true that Billy was forced to accept it. He did remove his arm for a minute, but the restless patient sat up at once and had to be forced down again among the pillows.

"You see," said Sally, almost triumphantly, and went on toward the stairs.

"Sally, don't," gasped Billy again, but he pled in vain.

"I can't stand it not to know," was Sally's only answer. When once she was set upon a thing it was quite impossible to turn her, a fact that had never been so well proved as now. She advanced to the stairs, leaving Billy in the dark, climbed to the first landing

and turned back to smile at him. She was certainly not afraid; she was of an equal certainty rather pleased at his helplessness to stop her.

She turned at the landing to go up the next flight. There must have been a draught under the closed door at the top, for it made her candle wink and flicker, but she marched on undismayed. She looked a dauntless, little figure as she went up from step to step, the moving light shining on her thick, yellow braids and the crossed straps of her white apron, and making her fat little shadow dance behind her on the wall.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRANGER AT THE MILL

THERE was a pause as Sally struggled with an obstinate latch, then she opened the door at the head of the stairs and disappeared. The removal of the light seemed to soothe the old sailor, since he lay still, while Billy stood listening—listening, for what, he did not quite know.

What he did hear was the sound that of all others he least expected. With a sharp crack that echoed throughout the frail old building, a rifle went off directly overhead. An instant later he heard Sally's voice, upraised in the terrified screaming of a thoroughly frightened child. He forgot Captain Saulsby completely, forgot everything except that he must run to help Sally. The door on the stairs had swung shut in the draft: it had slammed and latched itself so that he had a moment's struggle to get it open. When he did so finally and plunged into the room above, he had again

to wait for the passage of a second to make out just what was there.

An oil lamp stood upon the table in the middle of the room, but its light beneath the green shade fell in a narrow circle and left all the corners in darkness. He was vaguely aware that there was a man over yonder by the window, and that he held something in his hand over which he worked and muttered. It was a rifle, in whose magazine the cartridge evidently had jammed and had prevented the immediate firing of a second shot. Yet, even as Billy realized that this must be the case, the thing snapped into place and the hammer once more was drawn back with a sharp click. Sally, standing near him, dropped her candle, which fortunately went out, put her hands to her ears, and shrieked aloud,

"Stop him, Billy; he's going to do it again!"

It was not their lives the man was threatening. He crouched over the window sill, steadied the barrel of his weapon against the ledge and took long, deliberate aim. Billy, as he ran across the room, could see over the stranger's shoulder, down between the trees to the creek and the high rocks at the edge of the little harbour. There on the point in

a patch of brilliant moonlight, stood one of the bluejackets who had landed with them. He held a flag in each hand and was spelling out some signalled message in frantic haste. The ship showed vaguely in the dark nearly half a mile away to the eastward, but the moon hung low in the west and evidently formed a sharp background against which the moving flags could be plainly read. It seemed as though the sailor must know what danger threatened to bring his message to an end for he glanced backward over his shoulder more than once, yet never failed to continue swinging his flags with steady precision.

Billy was only quick enough to jerk at the stranger's arm just as the rifle went off again with a startling crash and a quick spurt of flame. He saw the sailor on the point stagger and drop the flag from his hand; at the same moment he felt a stunning blow upon the side of his head and his shoulder so that he seemed to see, for a second, room, lamp and Sally, all go around and around in confusing circles. He recovered himself quickly, but not in time to intercept the enemy's next move.

It was one of retreat, for evidently discovery was the thing most dreaded by this hidden

stranger of the mill. Billy had only an instant's view of his face, but he recognized, in that instant, the narrow, black-eyed countenance that had once peered at him from behind the rocks and that had so frightened Johann Happs when it rose above the wall. The man leaped over the window sill and dropped upon the ladder-like stairs outside, but the rotten timbers gave way beneath him and he fell heavily to the ground. The thick bushes below must have broken his fall, however, for he jumped up and made off into the dense undergrowth, while shouts on either hand showed that he was being watched for, and a crashing and tearing of branches indicated that the pursuit was hot.

Billy turned back from the window and went over to Sally.

"Are you hurt?" they both asked each other in the same breath. On being assured that the glancing blow Billy had received was "nothing, just nothing at all," Sally sighed deeply with relief and picked up her fallen candle.

"It was lucky I did not set us all on fire," she said shamefacedly. "I—I never could abide things that go off all of a sudden like that. Oh, Billy, what about the Captain?"

This reminder sent Billy downstairs almost as rapidly as he had come up. Captain Saulsby had been struggling to leave his couch again, but so firmly had Sally wrapped him up in blankets that he had only just succeeded in getting free of them and so had managed to do himself no harm. He was very querulous in his complaints when they laid him back upon the pillows, but submitted rather more meekly than before.

There followed a wait; it would have been hard for them to tell whether it lasted the half of an hour, or for five whole ones. The black shadows outside turned slowly to grey, the moonlight faded and disappeared, a fresh wind began to blow the fog away in shore. Somewhere out yonder in the woods a bird began to sing, offering them their first hope that the night with its desperate anxieties and terrors was at last giving place to day. Billy went to the window and threw it open so that Sally too, from her place beside Captain Saulsby, might hear the promise of the dawn.

The door pushed open and there came slowly in the bluejacket whom Billy had last seen signalling on the beach, a target for the stranger's rifle.

"Been quite a night, hasn't it?" the man said cheerfully as he sat down on the stool and wiped his face.

"Did he hit you?" "Did he hurt you?" the two children asked in a single breath.

"Never touched me," was the answer. "The first bullet went over my head and the second struck the staff of the flag and knocked it out of my hand—jarred my elbow something horrid, and nearly threw me down—but that's all the harm it did. The real mischief is that I'm afraid the man has got away."

"But he can't get off the Island," Billy objected.

"That is just what he has done," the sailor answered. "He knew the paths too well and left us tangled up in the thickets. We gave him a hot chase, until he got over to a house that stands on the shore beyond the woods, helped himself to the owner's catboat, and put off before we could get anywhere near. We have signalled to the ship, though, and they'll see that he doesn't get clear away. We have his friend Jarreth in jail, and this man should be joining him there before very long."

"It was your father's boat he got away in,

Sally," exclaimed the boy, "and she can sail pretty fast."

"I believe Uncle Sam has something that can catch her," the sailor said. "The fellow won't get off so easy as all that."

"And you have put Harvey Jarreth in jail?" Sally questioned.

"Yes; you should see him, fuming and fussing and strutting up and down like a mad turkey-cock, telling every one that 'his friend' will bail him out; that 'his friend' will make us all suffer for such insults. Much 'his friend' will ever help him! There really isn't a thing to hold Jarreth for, I'm afraid, unless we catch the other one. Harvey has just been made a tool of, but he won't believe it."

"How did you know the man was down here at the mill?" Billy asked.

"We didn't, for at first we had no notion that he was even on the Island. When he used to make his visits to Jarreth he always apparently came over from the mainland so that it was quite a time before it dawned on us that he was staying here all the while. He had covered up his tracks pretty well, but I don't quite know how he meant to keep himself hid after he took to shooting. I suppose

he was so excited that he hardly knew what he was about."

Captain Saulsby moved and groaned a little. The sailor came over and stood looking down on him with good-natured and troubled sympathy.

"I ought to have made some one come back for you," he said, "but the orders we landed with, were to hunt this fellow out, and we had no time to think of any one else. The two officers that were ashore had got wind of him already, so we had a time finding them, even, before we got after the German. We finally traced him down to the point here, but when we looked in at the window of the mill and heard the old captain swearing and shouting and saw only you two bending over him, we didn't think our friend could possibly be there. I knew you had been here since morning and the fellow had been seen at the crossroads in the afternoon."

"He must have come in when I was asleep," said Billy. It seemed more and more that his nap had been an especially unfortunate one.

"I had orders to go down and signal to the ship that we hadn't found him," the sailor

went on, "and as soon as I had finished the message I was coming back to find out if we could help you. I looked back over my shoulder to see if the others were coming, and it was then I happened to glance up and see our German friend in the window. He was so interested in trying to make out the message I was sending that he must have forgotten everything else. He had not even put out the lamp when he pushed the window wide open, so I could see him clear and black against the lighted room, and I guessed in a second who he was. I broke off my message and instead began telling the ship as quickly as I could that we had found him. He must have been able to read that, for the next minute—ping—a bullet went by me and stuck in the sand."

One of the officers now appeared in the doorway, come to inquire into the welfare of Captain Saulsby.

"We will get him home," he said; "the tide is off the causeway now and my men can carry him across to his own house, or perhaps on to the hospital in the village. I am afraid he is pretty sick after all these adventures! I wish we could have had time to help you sooner."

Four of the sailors bore the old captain down to the shore while Billy went home with Sally Shute through the woods. The fog was clearing and it was getting light at last; the stars were growing dimmer and dimmer and the eastern horizon showed a streak of gold. The two stumbled along, too weary to watch the coming dawn, to hear the birds that were beginning to sing, or even to say much to each other. They plodded down the lane in silence and reached Sally's gate at last.

"You're a fine, brave girl, Sally," Billy said, as they came up the path. But she would have none of his praise.

"I was just so curious to see what was up there," she said, "that I could not possibly help going to find out. I—I wish I hadn't screamed so when the rifle went off."

Early as it was, there proved to be a visitor there before them. Some one was sitting on the doorstone with his face buried in his hands, some one whose shock of rumpled yellow hair told plainly that it could be no other than Johann Happs.

"I—I came to see about the clocks, if they were running—" he began to explain lamely.

"It is rather a queer time to come," Sally

commented severely, regarding him with some suspicion. The look of utter misery that he gave her, however, melted her warm little heart and she sat down impulsively upon the step beside him.

"What is the matter, Joe, tell me," she urged.

Johann shook his head in mute anguish, and said nothing.

"It is not anything," he finally managed to get out; "not anything at all."

Billy's mind had been rapidly putting two and two together so that he broke forth now with the question:

"Johann, did you see that German go by here and take the catboat?"

"No—no," Johann began earnestly. "I don't know whom you mean." But his face belied his words.

"You did see him, you did!" exclaimed Billy. "Why in the world didn't you stop him?"

Sally added gently, patting his knee to reassure him:

"Don't be so upset, Johann. Tell us why you didn't stop him."

"How could I stop him?" Johann replied.



Johann shook his head in mute anguish.

"It was not my place to do so. And anyway, he had a revolver."

"Did you see it?" Billy asked mercilessly.

"No," was the answer, "but he carried one in his pocket: he always does."

Then, seeing how utterly he had betrayed himself by this last speech, he got up and walked slowly away down toward the shore, his one object being apparently to hide his stricken face from them.

The boy was about to hurry after him, but Sally put her hand upon his arm.

"Let him alone," she said; "the German is gone and we can't do anything now. No, Billy, don't go after him."

Billy hesitated, feeling, in spite of himself, that his anger was beginning to change to sympathy. He would still have followed, had not Sally's hand restrained him and Sally's voice become insistent.

"I know him better than you do," she maintained, "and I won't believe any harm of Johann. No, let him go."

Billy walked slowly back through the woods, across the causeway and up past the meadow to Captain Saulsby's little house. The opening poppies were blowing in the

morning wind, matching with their pink and scarlet the colors spreading across the sky. The fresh breeze felt pleasant on Billy's face, and made him breathe more quickly. He was weary beyond words, dead tired to the utmost limit; but he felt that for two nights and a day he had been living indeed. The very last vessels of the big battle fleet were still trailing away across the horizon, and he stopped to watch until the final line of smoke had disappeared.

He turned and went slowly up to the cottage. The old captain had revived enough to insist that he should be carried nowhere else, and had had the force to get his own way. A doctor had already been summoned and a nurse installed, so that he would have no lack of proper care. The doctor had finished his inspection, and was just coming out as Billy reached the doorstep.

"He certainly has had enough to kill any three ordinary men of his age," Billy heard him say, "but an old sailor like that is made of iron and rubber and rhinoceros hide. I think we will pull him through."

Billy walked on, down the path, out between the willows and along the road toward

the hotel. He heard a deep whistle as he turned the corner by the wharf, and saw a steamer landing at the pier. It was the night boat from Boston, bringing Aunt Mattie home. As he drew near a little group of people disembarked and his aunt came toward him looking very pale and bedraggled.

"It was good of you to get up so early, and come down to meet me, Billy," she said faintly. "We had such a rough passage, and the stewardess was so inattentive. It has really been a terrible night!"

CHAPTER IX

THE CALLING OF THE ISLAND

THE on-shore wind, blowing the cloud of fog before it, was a better friend to the German fugitive than it was to his pursuers. The search was a long and blind one, and all of the boats that scattered to find him came back with only failure to report. Some of them had seen a big white yacht go by them in the mist, but as such vessels were so common along the coast at that season, little notice had been taken of her. One boat, indeed, had come close enough to ask whether she had seen any such craft as the catboat they were seeking, and had been directed to bear off to the southward, as the yacht had sighted just such a boat near Andrew's Point. When the little catboat was finally found, however, floating idly with the tide, far to the north of Andrew's Point and just where the yacht might easily have passed her, suspicions began to arise as to how the German had escaped. In-

quiry was made all along the coast, but without bringing any news to light. The millionaire purchaser of an estate on Appledore Island seemed to have vanished completely.

Almost the first words that Captain Saulsby spoke were to ask what had become of that "son-of-a-gun of a friend of the Kaiser's." When he learned that in spite of all possible efforts the man had got clean away, he announced at first that he was too disgusted to try to get well; but altered his decision a little later.

"If the whole United States Navy can't catch a man like that," he said weakly to Billy, "I guess it's Ned Saulsby's duty to keep in the world a little longer, and try to be a match for the rascal."

The doctor said that the old sailor's recovery was miraculously quick; the Captain himself, that it was "slower than a wet week."

"That woman," he would say, indicating the long-suffering nurse, "that woman that's all rustles and starch and has no real heart, she keeps me down, when the only thing I need to get well is to walk out along the garden path and feel the good, warm sunshine on my back."

A day came, however, when "that woman's" reign was over and she and the old captain bade each other good-bye. They had become fast friends even in spite of their frequent clashes of opinion, so the parting, which took place in Billy's presence, was a most affectionate one.

"I may have spoken roughly to you, my dear," Captain Saulsby said, apologetically, "but I was sure, even at the time, that you were forgiving me right along. And there's no one that can deny that you spoke roughly to me many a time, and good cause you had to do it, too. I'm that spoiled that, now I'm to be my own master again, I really don't know how to hand myself my chicken broth."

"I'm truly sorry to leave you, Captain," the girl answered; "you are quite the worst patient I ever tried to manage, but I think you have done me the most credit."

She went away down the path, Captain Saulsby looking after her with a very grave face. Then he turned and hobbled into the house to kindle a fire in his little stove.

"It's too bad she's gone," he said solemnly to Billy, "but—the way I've longed for fried onions!" He heaved a mighty sigh of relief

and put a frying pan on the stove to heat. The whole of the cottage became filled presently with an odor that caused Captain Saulsby to sniff delightedly, but that would have made the nurse throw open every door and window.

When the delectable repast was over he came and sat down in the doorway and filled a pipe whose perfume rivalled that of even the onions.

"I'll have to smoke night and day for a while," he said, "to catch up on myself. Whew-ew, but that is good!"

Jacky Shute had laboured manfully in the garden during Captain Saulsby's illness. Even his small remnant of a conscience smote him when he was tempted to neglect the weeds, and the Captain's comment, "ship-shape as can be, Jacky; I didn't know you had it in you," made his small countenance beam with pride.

The delicate, crinkled poppies were blooming abundantly throughout the garden. It was the season when they were in their full glory, when all else in Captain Saulsby's little place, the vegetables, the currant bushes, and the fruit trees, must be quite cast into the

shade. The old sailor ventured forth on a short tour of inspection, and actually managed to reach the bench down by the hedge where he and Billy had sat upon the day they became acquainted.

"It doesn't look so bad," he remarked complacently as he viewed his small domain. "Of course, raising flowers and garden truck is a mighty little business after you have once followed the sea, but an old sailor likes to have things as they should be, whether he's at sea or ashore. No," he looked over the place again with a pleased smile, "no, it doesn't look so bad."

One of the summer visitors came along the path to ask for some of the packets of poppy-seed that Captain Saulsby, although he made a business of selling them, always parted with most grudingly. This woman he looked over long and severely, and asked her many searching questions before he finally drew a package of seeds from his pocket and graciously allowed her to buy it.

"She looks to me like one of those women who would try to grow poppies in a pot," he said to Billy after she had gone. "I didn't really quite trust her, but I gave her the bene-

fit of the doubt. She came from up Boston way: that was what saved her. I hope she will really take care of them."

"I've noticed you won't sell seeds to everybody," Billy said. "Don't you like to think that your flowers will be growing everywhere?"

"They won't grow unless people treat them right," he answered. "There's some women, those young giggly things with embroidery parasols, that think my flowers are 'so attractive' and that they can grow them to pin to the front of their ruffled white dresses. Much good poppies will do any one who tries to wear them! They droop and die in ten minutes and the sweet young things say 'Oh, dear!' and throw them away. And there are others who say my place here is 'so original and quaint' and they must have a corner in their gardens just like it, so they take the seeds away to plant them somewhere in the Middle West where the ground bakes as hard as iron and the hot air dries up the buds before they can open. No, poppies have to have cool earth to dig their toes into, and cool salt air to breathe; it's sea breezes that put the colour into them, and a good wet fog is their meat and

drink. Poor things, I hate to think of them off somewhere drooping and withering for a whiff of fresh salt wind."

"Captain Saulsby," said Billy gravely, "I do believe you care a lot for those flowers of yours. You are always saying you don't, but I think I won't believe you again. I can see by the very way you look at them that you love them."

"No, can you?" exclaimed the old sailor in genuine surprise. "Why—why—maybe I do now, I never thought of it." He looked about the garden as though suddenly seeing it in a new light. "I hated the whole place bitterly enough when I first knew I must stop here all the rest of my life, and my only wish was that the time might not be long. But I've worked and tended and watched over it for five years and—well, you are right. I have learned to love it and never knew. That's a queer thing, now, isn't it?"

"How glad you must be that it wasn't sold," Billy went on, "that all that trouble and worry is over for good."

"I'm not so sure of its being for good," the old captain returned reflectively; "the fellow got clear away, and as long as he's still free

to make trouble, there will be mischief brewing. And there's plenty more like him where he came from, too. No, there is still danger for Appledore Island, I am sure of that."

"Do you think that German clock-maker could have helped him to get away?" Billy asked. "I have wondered a good deal if they didn't have something to do with each other."

"There's Germans and Germans," the old man answered. "I put a lot of faith in Johann Happs, but the trouble of it is you can't always tell. I think a time is coming, though, coming pretty soon, when things will show plainly which kind of German is which. But I may be wrong."

Their talk was interrupted here by a visitor, not a summer tourist this time, but a person of a very different kind. It was Harvey Jarreth, fresh and smiling and sure of himself again, in spite of his unpleasant experience with the naval authorities and his week-end visit to Appledore's jail. There had been no evidence to bring against him as to his transactions with the prosperous stranger, so that he had been set free after giving many promises that he would be more careful in future. His reputation for shrewdness had

suffered greatly for a little time; but as the weeks passed and people began to forget the disturbance that they had never quite understood, Harvey Jarreth began to come into his own again.

He was jauntily dressed as ever today, in the light grey clothes that made his sandy complexion still sandier, and that by their extreme of fashion showed just how many years they lagged behind the present mode. His straw hat was a little frayed and battered at the edges, but he wore it at just such a cheerful angle as when Billy had first seen him.

"Well, Captain," he began genially, "that was a queer business about that city friend of mine, wasn't it? And the joke of it is that it looks just now as though you had been right about him. That's pretty funny. Ha, ha!"

"It will go right on being just as big a joke," returned the Captain sourly. "You had better go home and practice laughing at it until you can manage something better than that cackling you're doing now. It takes a lot of learning for a man to know how to laugh at himself."

Jarreth's thin face flushed and he shifted his feet uneasily.

"The joke is going to be on you, yet, Ned Saulsby," he said, "for you'll find you're going to part with your land and not get much of a price for it in the end. You had your chance to sell out fair, and didn't; now you'll see that there are other ways. That friend of mine was as straight as a string. It would take a smarter man than he was to fool Harvey Jarreth."

"He was so crooked he could hide behind a corkscrew," returned the Captain with spirit. "And he has fooled you once, and will likely fool you again. The first time he got you into jail: look out it isn't the penitentiary you go to after his next visit. He helped to get you out of one just as generously as he will help you out of the other."

"He felt real bad about my being in jail," Jarreth maintained heatedly, his temper evidently becoming more and more ruffled.

"You've heard from him then?" inquired Captain Saulsby quickly. "And why didn't you tell that to the people who are still looking for him?"

"It's not my way to get a friend into trouble," was the answer. "Yes, I heard from him and he sent me a box of cigars. Have one?"

He reached into his breast pocket, but Captain Saulsby stopped him with a gesture. Cigars were a rare luxury with him, but not to be acquired in any such way as this.

"No, thank you," he said drily. "I've always heard that Germans smoke the worst cigars in the world."

Harvey Jarreth thrust the proffered gift back into his pocket.

"All right," he answered briskly. "I'm not the fellow to force things on people that don't want them. As for Germans, how about that clock-maker that you're so thick with? And it will be you that will be making me a present before long, Ned Saulsby, making me a present of this land; for the price you'll get for it will bring it down to about that. You've been a careless man about your taxes, Ned, and nothing short of criminal about the way you've looked after your title-deeds." He looked about the garden with an appraising eye, as though it were already his own. "You won't be planting poppies next year," he said, "unless you care to plant them on another man's ground. Well, *good* morning."

He walked off strutting jauntily, swinging his cane.

"He's got more need to lean on that stick than to flirt it around like that," muttered Captain Saulsby. "Ah—h!"

The last swing had cut off the heads of a half-dozen tall white poppies, whereupon Jarreth turned about with an impudent grin to see if the old man dared protest.

"Don't take any notice of him," growled the Captain; "that is what will hurt him worst of anything."

So Billy, by great effort, managed to keep quiet, and the disagreeable visitor walked away without the satisfaction of a word of comment.

"Do you really think he can get your land, Captain Saulsby?" Billy asked anxiously, as soon as Jarreth was safely out of hearing.

"I don't quite know," the sailor admitted slowly; "you see the place has belonged to my people so long I never thought about having much proof of the ownership. Harvey is right when he says I've been careless about taxes and things. He held a mortgage on the land once, and though it was paid off in my father's time I'm blessed if I know if there is anything to show for the payment at my end. There's sure to be plenty of documents of all

kinds at his. He is terribly anxious, for some reason, to get those hard, lean fingers of his on the property."

He puffed at his pipe for quite a little while in silence, then spoke again.

"That's a dangerous kind of man, Billy Wentworth, the most risky kind a community can have. A man who thinks he's smart and isn't—that's about as bad a combination as can be made. Jarreth has a reputation to live up to, for being shrewd and quick and able to get the best of people; he nearly lost that reputation and he will stop at nothing to get it back. He doesn't mean any harm, he hardly means to be really dishonest; but he's so bound to prove himself smart that he will let anybody who is more of a rascal than he is, make a fool of him. I'm not easy in my mind when I think of him and of that 'friend' of his that he's so bound to prove is straight. No, I don't like it."

And when Billy went home to supper he left the Captain still sitting on the bench, evidently turning his anxious thoughts to the same matter, if one could judge by the way he smoked his pipe in short, troubled puffs.

The days went by, the poppies drooped their

heads and scattered their petals in the winds, the early apples turned yellow on Captain Saulsby's trees, and the blackberries ripened along the wall. The time of Billy's visit had come to an end; the morning of his departure arrived, and he came down, dressed in his travelling clothes, to say good-bye to his dear, good friend.

He walked in past the gap in the stone wall and between the bent, old willow trees, went slowly up the path and down through the garden, not at all eager for this last parting. He did not quite know why he was so uncomfortable and depressed; he thought perhaps it might be that his stiff collar felt so uneasy against his sunburned neck and so made him miserable, more or less, all over. He was going West again; surely he was glad about that. He assured himself over and over again, that, yes, he was very glad.

Captain Saulsby was sitting smoking in the sun down by the hedge. They talked for a little while of various things, Billy somehow feeling reluctant to say that this visit must be the last.

"Got your shore hat, I see," the Captain observed finally. "That means the end of the

season for sure and that you're leaving us. How early next spring will you be coming back?"

Billy was a little surprised, and for the second time that day. Early in the morning he had walked through the woods to say goodbye to Sally Shute. She too had asked when he would come back, taking it cheerfully for granted that he would never fail to return soon.

"I'm not coming back next year," he said now; "we're going out to the Rockies to camp, my father and mother and I, and the year after—well, I hardly know where we'll be then. We don't often go to the same place twice. No, maybe I won't ever be coming back."

Captain Saulsby knocked the ashes out of his pipe and smiled slowly.

"You'll be coming back," he said; "there's nobody can keep away always. You'll think that the prairies, and the big mountains, and all the wonderful things in the West can satisfy you, but a time will come, perhaps all in a minute, when you'll remember the shining blue of the water out there, and the sound of the surf on the beach, and the smell of wet

sea-weed when the tide goes down. A boy who's been on the sea, and in it and near it and of it as you have been this summer, Billy Wentworth, can never get away from it again."

"I'm not so sure," said Billy; "of course I've liked it and all that but—"

"You can't know yet," his friend replied. "There was my garden here; for five years I thought I hated it, and now, since you drew my notice, I find I've learned to love it. And you'll find you love all this—" he swept his arm in a wide gesture to include the rocky shore, the high, green hill of Appledore and the wide stretch of sunny sea—"yes, that you love it too well to stop away. Well, good-bye; I hope you'll have a good passage, but I fear it's going to be a rough one."

It was true that, although the sun was shining, there were banks of clouds in the west and signs of coming stormy weather.

"Do you hear the island singing?" Captain Saulsby said. "That means wind for sure."

It was a strange thing about the rocks of Appledore that, when rising winds blew across them in a certain way, there was a queer, hollow, humming sound that the fisherman said

was "Appledore Island calling." Billy had heard it before; it made him vaguely unhappy and homesick now.

"It won't take the boat long to get me ashore," he said. "I'm going by train from Rockford, not all the way by sea to Boston. Well, good-bye, Captain Saulsby; I—I—I can't—good-bye."

He had meant to thank the old sailor for his many kindnesses, words that seemed simple enough to speak; but in the end he said nothing, merely turned away and walked down through the willow trees, never looking back. He bade farewell to his aunt on the pier, embarked upon the waiting steamer and headed away toward the shore, toward the West, toward all the things he knew. Yet he stood on deck and looked back as long as he could see toward Appledore Island, until Captain Saulsby's red-roofed cottage had vanished, until points and headlands disappeared and the green hills sank and became smaller and smaller on the horizon.

The winds rose, the boat rolled a trifle, but still did not disturb his steady watching. He thought of the friends he had made there, of

the adventures he had been through, of the dangers that still hung about the place.

"Will I ever see it again?" he wondered, over and over. This was still the burden of his thoughts when the boat rounded the point into Rockford harbour and Appledore Island vanished from his sight. Yet he still seemed to hear it calling, even after his straining eyes could see it no longer.

CHAPTER X

THREE QUARTERS OF A YEAR

BILLY went back to school and saw the following months of work and play go by in a dizzy procession of speeding days. Thanksgiving and Christmas seemed to stop a little longer than the others; he spent the one at a town on one of the Great Lakes, ice-boating, and the other in Chicago, where he had some cousins. They were pleasant days and weeks and months; yet he saw them go by with some satisfaction, for he looked forward greatly to the time when his father and mother would come home.

The Easter vacation approached and, on account of some alterations to the school buildings, was made much longer than usual. Billy, however, could get little satisfaction out of even such unexpected good fortune, for letters from South America had been becoming more and more doubtful as to the chance of

an early return, and one, arriving the morning the holidays began, settled the matter finally.

"Business moves too slowly in these Spanish-American countries," his father wrote, "and what you think you can do in one day always takes you two or three. Therefore plans for one year are almost bound to stretch into two, so do not be disappointed, son, if we do not come back until autumn."

Billy put down the letter when he had read so far and sat staring at the opposite wall. It seemed too hard to endure after he had waited patiently for so long. He picked up the page and read on.

"Your mother and I have decided that since you must spend another summer alone you might as well have the camping trip you had so counted on last year. Ask any three of the boys you like and make all your own plans. Otto Bradford at Mason's Falls will be the best guide for you to take; you remember we had him two years ago. Indeed, if your Easter vacation is extended, as the headmaster wrote me it might be, you could run out to Montana and make your arrangements with Otto; that would probably be most satisfac-

tory. You are old enough now to manage such matters."

Again Billy laid down the paper and sat thinking. Here was the thing that, next to his father's and mother's coming, he had long wanted above all others. A camping trip—among those wonderful mountains—planned by himself—to include just the boys he wanted. Whom should he ask? There was—

"Come on, Billy Wentworth, or you'll miss the train." The shout from the hall below brought him quickly to his senses. They were all leaving for Chicago to play the last basket-ball game of the season; it was from there that they were to scatter for the holidays. He seized his suitcase, jammed on his hat and ran downstairs. He would have to decide on the way whether he would go West at once or not.

It was not unnatural, perhaps, that a party of boys wrapped up in their own and the school's affairs, should have very little knowledge of the bigger matters of the outside world. Lately, however, events were becoming so exciting, situations were growing so tense, that every boy, the moment he got on the train, must have his paper and devour the

daily news. For nearly three years the war had waged in Europe, a war far too big to realize, far too distant to be very disturbing to a schoolboy's daily life. But now war was coming near, the war with Germany that every one suddenly discovered had been inevitable from the first, yet for which every one had been too busy to get ready. It was the week before Easter, the season of that April session of Congress when the war-bill slowly but surely made its way through Senate and House, and the possibility of a struggle became a final reality.

The party of boys reached Chicago on Monday, and played their basket-ball game that evening. For a moment the victory that was so hardly but so triumphantly won by their team, blotted out in Billy's mind the memory of what was stirring the whole world outside. Yet even on the way back to the hotel he felt the thrill in the air, he saw crowds gathering about the bulletin boards and heard some one say, "The President is addressing Congress now."

He went to bed clinging somehow to the obstinate thought,

"There can't be war, there can't. Things

like that happen to other people, in other places. Nothing happens here at home."

When he got up in the morning the war again seemed far away. The whole party of boys was to be taken out by their hosts of the rival school, to be shown some of the sights of Chicago before train time. They all stood waiting in the lobby for the automobiles to come up, when the mail was brought in and some one handed Billy a letter.

It was a note from his aunt who had been spending the winter in Boston.

"I am going down to Appledore Island for Easter," it said, "although I have never been there so early in the season before. I have a fancy to try it, and wonder whether you would feel tempted to try it with me. I happened to hear that your vacation is to be longer than usual, so that it would give you time to come. I admit that the invitation does not seem a very exciting one, but, if you happen to have no other place to go, you might be glad of my company, as I shall be so glad to have yours."

There was a postscript added,

"If you should happen to arrive before I do, and do not find the hotel ready, you could stay with Captain Saulsby."

The first motor rolled up to the door, Billy was called for, so he stuffed the letter into his pocket and hurried out. They were swept away through the crowded streets of Chicago, where spring was already showing in the green grass and blooming crocuses of the little squares. It was even more in evidence in Lincoln Park where the shrubs and trees were putting out their new leaves and flowers were blooming all along the way. It made one feel queer and restless, Billy thought, as though one wanted something very badly and did not quite know what it was. It seemed strange how hard it was to make up his mind just what he was going to do.

The lake was very blue there on their right hand as they drove along the Sheridan Road sweeping constantly through neat suburbs, some large, some small, but all alike in one thing: that every one in the world was busy planting a garden. They passed through bits of real country with fields and meadows and pasture lands, and stopped at last before a big iron gate that guarded an enclosure full of brick buildings, wide, smooth lawns and many winding roads.

"They won't let us in on account of the war

scare," said one of the boys who had brought them, "but we have to turn back here so we might as well stop and look through the gate. It is the Great Lakes Naval Station, where they train the sailors for the warships. Oh, look, they're drilling now!"

A squad of uniformed sailor boys came marching past, very neat with their blue coats, their small white hats, their brown legs all moving together. They swept by like a great perfect machine, minds and bodies all trained to act absolutely together for the better accomplishment of a common purpose. They moved back and forth across the green, wheeling, turning, marching and countermarching. How hard they must have worked, Billy thought, to learn to do it so well, how each one must be trying now to do his own part perfectly so that the whole might be perfect. It brought back to him a quick memory of the night he had witnessed the war game, of the early morning when he had watched the ships go by and had seen, if only for a moment, what the Navy really meant. From what port were those same ships sailing forth today, to play at the new war game; over what seas would they

be scattered to guard America from a real and terrible foe?

Then, for some reason his mind swept back to the other subject upon which he had been thinking so deeply, to the camping trip for which he should, even now, be making plans. At this very moment Otto Bradford would probably be coming out of his cabin to take the horses down to water, the sun would be bright, the thin air very cold, and the mountains all scarlet and yellow and brown in the strange colors that only the Rocky Mountains can show. Perhaps it would be so clear that you could see the Highlands, that circle of tremendous peaks beyond the rough brown buttes that hemmed the valley in, the high sky line that often was not visible for weeks together but, on a brilliant day like this, would spring suddenly into being, a vast wall of glittering white, with jagged summits that seemed to touch the very sky. The wind would blow down from the snow fields sharp and chill, it would lift the manes of the horses as they snorted, kicked up their heels and went galloping off down the trail. It would be good to see it all again but—

The sailors were marching away across the wide green. Beyond them, between two buildings he could see the lake, rough and deep blue on this windy morning, darkened here and there by the passing shadows of flying clouds. A schooner came into view, beating into the wind, first in shadow, then in sunshine, cutting the blue water in a line of foam. She was doubtless some worn old tub of awkward lines and dingy sails, should you see her close; but here, with the stiff breeze to aid her, she sped along like a live thing, the bright sun changing her sails to silver. If fresh water was so blue as that, what would salt water be? If this wind could seem so sharp and bracing, if Lake Michigan could roll in such waves upon the beach, what would it be to feel the fresh sea breeze, and to hear the surf come thundering in on the shores of Appledore?

"What are you thinking about so hard, Billy?" one of his comrades asked suddenly, breaking sharply into his dream.

Billy drew a long breath, glanced up at the clock above the gateway and said,

"I was wondering how soon we can be getting back to the hotel. I have to make the

noon train for Boston. I think I will go East instead of West for this vacation."

Once he had started on his journey he began to realize how truly he had longed to go back. The miles seemed to crawl, he stood on the platform and counted the white posts and wondered why they did not go by faster. He seemed to have been travelling a week by the time they reached Albany; he was utterly worn out with impatience when at last they steamed into Boston.

Having an hour or so to wait he went down to Atlantic Avenue, just to see the fish markets and the rows of schooners lying at the piers, to listen to the splash of the rising tide. He found the place so fascinating that he nearly missed his train, but managed to catch it at the last minute, and sped away on the final stage of his journey.

"Rockford?" said the conductor, looking at his ticket, "we don't run as far as that at this season of the year. We stop at Piscataqua, and there is only one train a day from there until the summer rush begins. I don't think you can make connections; you will have to stop over."

To wait a whole day when he was but a few miles from the end of his journey was quite out of the question for Billy. He knew that a jingling, rattling, two-horse stage plied between Piscataqua and Rockford; perhaps he could catch that. He found on inquiry that he could, that it would start in half an hour. In summer one could go by motor, but "it ain't the season" was the only answer he could get to all his questions, so that he was forced to content himself with Silas Oakley and his slow and talkative mode of travel.

He walked about the streets a little in Piscataqua and stopped at a bulletin board before the newspaper office. It was the Friday morning that war was actually declared. Billy saw the notice go up as he stood watching, but observed very little change in the crowd that gathered to read that the last step had been taken. People looked a little more anxious, perhaps; more than one said, "Well, I'm glad the waiting's over." That was all.

At the end of the street he saw two bluejackets standing before the door of a little building above which a big flag was flying.

"That's the recruiting station," a passerby told him; "they are enlisting men for the

Navy. It's going pretty briskly, too, I hear; they have almost the authorized number now, so they will close the place in a few days. I'm glad our town has done so well."

Billy walked on down to the corner where the stage was to start. He did not yet feel that the war was real; why, it *couldn't* be real on a bright, gay, spring morning, with the church bells ringing for Good Friday services, and everything looking just the same as it always did. It was time for the stage to go, but the driver was telling a good story to some friends and could not be bothered to hurry himself for the three passengers who were waiting. The boy bounced about impatiently on the narrow seat and thought that the "I says" and "he says" and "then I just told him" would never come to an end.

They started at last, and a long, bumpy, weary ride it proved to be. The woods on each side of them were green and full of flowers, the little brooks below the bridges were brimming full with the spring rains, the birds were all singing their best songs, but Billy saw only the road before them and heard nothing but the squeaking of the wheels and the creaking of the clumsy old stage. It seemed as

though the drive and Silas Oakley's conversation would never have an end; but at last both were cut short by their arrival at Rockford.

It was late in the afternoon, just the time for the Appledore boat. Billy made a breathless dash down to the landing and made it just as the gang-plank was being taken in. He hardly understood, himself, why he was in such haste to be there; he only knew that his longing for the place made it impossible to delay a minute. As the boat puffed out of the harbour he leaned back in the deck chair, content at last, since he knew that now there were no more obstacles between him and his journey's end.

He was glad to find that it was still light when finally the little steamer lay alongside of Appledore wharf. He was rather surprised to see Johann Happs on the pier, an unfamiliar Johann dressed in best clothes a good deal too small for him, and carrying a battered old suitcase.

"Are you going away, Joe?" he asked in surprise.

"No—yes—that is, I don't know," was Johann's rather startling answer. He had a worried, hunted look that troubled Billy.

Johann walked down to the steamer's gangway, turned back once, then finally stepped resolutely aboard. Yet a little later, when Billy looked back over his shoulder at the wharf, he saw the boat steaming away and Johann sitting on his suitcase gazing after her, an odd and forlorn figure.

"I wonder what's the matter with him," Billy thought; but he did not have time to reflect very deeply upon the matter. He could not wait to inquire whether the hotel was open; he merely set down his bag and sped along the beach path toward Captain Saulsby's point. He could see the red roof peeping out among the trees, he could even see some one moving in the garden; therefore he could not wait. The crooked old willow trees were a mass of new yellow-green, and a blackbird sang very loud to him as he hurried through the gap in the wall.

The old sailor was digging in the garden when Billy came swinging down the path. His pipe and a folded newspaper lay upon the bench, he seemed to be working very busily and to be talking angrily to himself. He greeted Billy as calmly as though they had parted only the evening before.

"Well," he said, "you've come back, have you? I thought you would."

His smile of welcome was a warm and friendly one, but it disappeared almost instantly. Plainly something was weighing very heavily on Captain Saulsby's mind.

"Did you bring an evening paper?" he demanded almost at once, and took eagerly the one that Billy drew from his pocket. The announcement that war had been declared blazed in huge headlines across the first page.

"It's no surprise," commented the old man as he sat down on the bench to read. He growled with impatience because he tried to make out the smaller print without his spectacles, could not manage it, but had to take time to search through his pockets, find them and set them laboriously on his nose. He read greedily for some minutes, then put the paper down and sat on gazing moodily out to sea.

"They are recruiting for the Navy over at Piscataqua," Billy remarked at last, merely for the sake of saying something.

"Yes," answered the Captain; "I was over there myself two days ago."

"Why, what for?" the boy asked in surprise.

"What for?" exclaimed the Captain. "Why, to enlist of course. And they wouldn't take me; no, the fools wouldn't take me! Here I know every yard and shroud and timber in every kind of ship that's afloat. I've lived long enough really to learn something—and they turned me away. They're taking boys of eighteen, sixteen even, if their parents say yes, fellows who have learned about as much of ships as they could find out from sailing chips in a duck-pond. I don't know what our Navy means. Here's a war coming, and a valuable man like me applies—and they won't have him."

His outburst was so full of wrath that for a moment Billy was awed into silence. But even the silence was thunderous with rage, so he finally broke it.

"What are you doing now?" he inquired.

Captain Saulsby put down the paper and his spectacles, rose stiffly and once more grasped his spade.

"I'm planting potatoes," he said bitterly.

CHAPTER XI

THE WATCHFIRES OF APPLEDORE

It was Easter Sunday and Billy and his Aunt were going to church. The day was to bring forth strange things, but it began as any Sunday might, with bright weather that was a little hot, with a pleasant walk up through the fields while the bells were ringing, with entry into the cool, dim little church and a silent wait, for Aunt Mattie was one of the people who are always early. There was a good deal of stiff rustling of the Appledore population's Sunday best, as in twos and threes the congregation filed in, fishermen and their wives, some more prosperous ones who farmed as well as fished, the hotel proprietor, and Harvey Jarreth in a suit of very new clothes.

Billy knew well that one should not look around, but he nevertheless turned full about to smile a greeting at Sally Shute when she came into the pew behind him. Her stiff

skirts stood out almost straight around her and her yellow braids were brushed until they shone. He observed that she had grown a little taller since last year, but that her pink cheeks were as round as ever and her face as earnest. Her father and mother were with her, and young Jacky, very restless and making continual trouble.

The service began with a prayer that Billy sometimes, during idle moments in a long sermon, had examined curiously in the prayer book and wondered if it were ever used. "In Time of War and Tumults," it was headed, and reminded him of what for a little time he had forgotten, that there was a war. He looked out of the window and tried to think of it as true, but failed. No, there certainly could not be a war, not on such a day as this. Then he saw that one of the fishermen's wives was crying quietly behind her pew, yes, and there was another over in the corner doing the same thing. They had boys who were bluejackets in the Navy, he supposed, and were foolish enough to think that something might happen to them. On the way up the hill, Aunt Mattie had been giving him a little talk on history and had pointed out that nearly all

of our wars began in April. Why in April, he wondered, when everything seemed less like war then than at any other time of the year. He began to think idly of how many Easter Sundays there must have been just like this one, back, back as far as the Revolution, when women bravely put on their best and toiled up to the church, only to cry in secret behind the pews because there was going to be a war. Why—

His mind was wandering farther and farther from the service. Suddenly it was brought back by a quick touch upon his arm.

"Captain Saulsby is in the doorway," whispered Sally Shute behind him. "I think he wants you for something."

There indeed stood the old sailor in the door, looking distressed and uncomfortable and peering about as though in search of some one. He seemed much relieved when he caught Billy's eye and saw the boy rise to tip-toe out. He put a paper into Billy's hand as they went down the path together.

"I want that telephoned to the telegraph office at Rockport," he said. "I have tried to do it myself, but I can't hear quite well enough to make sure they have got it right, and I don't

want the hotel clerk to give it for me, or he would be telling it all over the Island. I hope your Aunt won't mind it that I called you out of the church."

Billy read over the message, then, in bewilderment, read it again.

"Why, Captain Saulsby," he said, "it doesn't make sense!"

"I know it," agreed the Captain, "and I don't quite know what it stands for myself. But that naval officer from Piscataqua who was out here yesterday told me to send such and such a message if this thing or that thing happened; he wrote out several to cover different cases. I suppose he thought I couldn't get a regular cipher code straight. Maybe I couldn't."

The day before, Captain Saulsby had had a visitor whose coming had seemed both to please him and to make him feel important. An officer from one of the warships lying in the harbour of Piscataqua had come all the way to Appledore to see him. At first the old man had announced that he would speak to no officer unless he came to apologize for the Navy's refusal of its best recruit; but he had finally changed his mind and had held a long

and earnest talk with his guest in the garden.

"There's a use for old men after all, if they just know something," he said mysteriously to Billy that evening, and had seemed so cheered that he could even speak of potato-planting without bitterness.

Billy went into the hotel's telephone booth and sent the message, spelling out each word laboriously, since the girl operator at the other end was not used to taking code messages and seemed much annoyed at the lack of meaning.

"I can't waste my time sending such nonsense," was her first tart comment, and it required much persuasion to make her believe that all was as it should be.

When he had finished with Captain Saulsby's message, he proceeded to send another on his own account. It was a cablegram to his father, asking if he would give his consent, should Billy wish to enlist in the Navy.

"If there is going to be a real war I might want to go in by and by," he reflected. "It will take two months to get a letter answered, so I may as well ask this way. I'm afraid he won't say yes. If I were eighteen I wouldn't have to ask him. But once it is done I know he and mother wouldn't object."

It took some little time to get this dispatch off, as he had first to go up to his room to look up the address. His father had left his mother in Lima and had gone up to some little mining town in the Andes, where the Spanish names were of the most unpronounceable kind. The operator's short temper was quite exhausted when at last she had got it all.

"When you think up anything new, let me know," was her acid farewell as she rang off.

Captain Saulsby had grown tired of waiting and had walked back to his cottage. Billy found him at the foot of the garden, staring out to sea through the binoculars that had been one of the trophies of their adventure at the mill.

"Nice glasses that German fellow left us," the old sailor remarked as he lowered them to change the focus. Then he added more slowly, "I shouldn't wonder if he would be coming back for them one of these days."

"Why, how can you think that?" cried Billy astonished.

"Well," the Captain returned reflectively, "there's Harvey Jarreth now. He has been sporting a lot of new clothes lately and has been getting money from somebody. There is no person about here complaining that Harvey

has cheated him, so it must be coming from outside. He is bound that he will prove yet that he wasn't fooled in that affair last summer, and we can't tell just how far that folly will take him. There are other things, too, big and little, down to foot-tracks in my potato patch. But the last one is that yacht out there; she has gone by the Island three times already today, and I don't like her looks. She may belong to some harmless, dirt-common millionaire, and then she may not. I know all of that kind of vessel that sails in these waters and she's a new one to me."

He adjusted the glass again and looked long at the moving speck and the wreath of smoke that trailed across the sea.

"I don't like her," he repeated, shaking his head, "and I've sent a message to that officer telling him so."

Billy had a look at the vessel also, but could make nothing of her. To him she might have been any one of a thousand pleasure boats that plied those seas in summer time.

"Well, there is nothing to do but wait," the Captain said at last, as the yacht disappeared and he closed the glasses into their case with a snap.

Wait they did through the length of a hot, sultry day. Aunt Mattie's friendship for the Captain was even great enough to secure her forgiveness for his having called Billy out of church. The boy was sent up to the hotel with a great bunch of spring flowers as a peace offering, but, having delivered them, he went back to the cottage once more to spend the slow hours sitting on Captain Saulsby's doorstep or walking restlessly up and down the garden.

What he was expecting, or what Captain Saulsby expected, he did not know at all; but whatever the possibilities were, for long hours nothing occurred. The sun disappeared under a cloud, the atmosphere grew hotter and heavier: it was plain that a storm was coming, although as yet there was no wind. Far out to sea the big bell-buoy was rocking in the uneasy swells, and ringing fitfully. The time passed, the afternoon darkened to twilight, the sun emerged a moment, then went down in a blaze of angry, coppery red, but still nothing happened. Perhaps Captain Saulsby had been quite mistaken.

It had grown quite dark and the church bells were ringing again for the evening serv-

ice, but Billy was still sitting before Captain Saulsby's door. Quick steps—they could be no other than Sally Shute's—came across the garden, and the little girl stepped out of the dark and sat down beside him.

"Mother and Jacky have gone to church," she said, "but I came over here to see the Captain. Is he sick again, or anything? Is something wrong?"

"No," returned Billy with an effort, "No, nothing's wrong."

Even if he had felt free to tell her, he could hardly have explained what was amiss. A heavy feeling in the air, a queer thrill inside him, a vague sensation that something big, too big to understand, was about to happen: could one call that "something wrong"? Billy hardly thought so and therefore kept silent.

Sally moved about uneasily for a little while, got up, seated herself again, then finally jumped up once more.

"I can't keep still, Billy Wentworth, and no more can you," she announced. "Let's go down on the beach."

They went down over the sparse sea-grass, across the smooth water-worn rocks to the beach, left hard and wet by the receding tide.

For a short time they walked on the sand without speaking. The winter storms had washed up quantities of driftwood that now lay, dry and bleached white, in tumbled heaps here and there above high water mark. The two sat down by one of them at last, when they became weary of tramping up and down. Suddenly Sally lifted her head to listen.

"Why does the bell-buoy ring louder?" she questioned.

It was true that the far-off clanging voice sounded clearer, all at once; it rang loud and steady through the quiet night for a moment, then dropped again to the faint, intermittent "clang-clang-clang," to which Billy had listened all the afternoon.

"What could ring it like that?" he was asking himself, but even while he was so thinking the answer came to him. The waves of a passing steamer would rock the buoy for just that length of time, setting it to calling louder through the windless silence. They sat waiting and by and by heard a sharp swish, swish, as a succession of heavier swells broke upon the sandy beach. Yes, it must have been a steamer, coming close in, under cover of the dark. What was she? The shore boat?

No, that had been lying at the wharf for an hour. The Boston steamer? That was not yet running. Could she be a certain white yacht of clean-cut, racing lines, the one that had slipped by Appledore in the fog, that night of the adventure at the mill, the one that had passed the Island three times already that day?

"I think I had better tell Captain Saulsby," Billy said.

He had not far to go, for he met the old sailor stumbling his way through the dark half-way down the path. Even his dull old ears had heard the change in the bell-buoy's voice, and he had come in such haste that he still carried his lighted pipe in one hand and the bundle of papers he had been reading in the other.

"Did you see anything? Did you hear anything?" he demanded as Billy came to his side. Before the boy could answer, Sally's quick feet came pattering behind him.

"There is a boat," she cried. "I heard oars! Oh, come quickly."

When, however, they all three arrived upon the beach there was nothing to be heard except ripples lapping quietly against the sand. A

little breeze had arisen, but here, inside the point, the water was still very smooth. Over to the right they could see the lights of the hotel; beyond, a little further around the curve of the bay, the clustered, twinkling lamps of the village. Above, on the hill, Billy could see the shining pointed windows of the little church and could even distinguish the sound of a hymn tune that came drifting down to them. But here upon the shore all was utterly silent, while no amount of peering through the blind dark could give any clue as to what manner of ship might be swinging at her anchor out yonder in the tide. Sally assured them in excited whispers that she could not have been mistaken, but the old Captain made no reply, as he alternately puffed fiercely upon his pipe or let it go out. He had just pulled out his match box to relight it for the third time when Billy touched his arm.

"I hear it," he whispered. "Listen."

The monotonous creak of rowlocks was plainly to be heard now, and the quiet dip and splash of oars as they rose and fell.

"But—but—they are coming from over toward the village: they are going past us," Sally exclaimed. "What can that mean?"

It was puzzlingly true that the sound seemed to be moving parallel to the shore and was beginning to pass them. What was even more bewildering was that suddenly the dipping oars stopped entirely and there came across the water the sound of low voices, more than one speaking at a time, as though in heated argument. The three looked at each other in mystified astonishment.

"I think—" began Sally but never got any further. A voice rose suddenly out of the darkness, a man's voice, but shouting so loud and high that it was almost a scream.

"No," they heard. "No, no, I will not go!"

There arose a tumult of oaths, of confused, angry words; there was a noise of oars cracking together, then a mighty splash. Billy and Sally Shute ran down the beach with Captain Saulsby vainly trying to follow as quickly.

"I know that voice," cried Sally, then lifted her own to its utmost strength to call valiantly through the dark.

"Johann, Johann Happs," she shouted with all her might, then again, "Johann, Johann; we are here."

Something darker than the dark water

emerged suddenly into their sight, somebody plunged through the shallow breakers and fell gasping on the beach. In a moment the tall, sprawling figure was up and running through the sand toward Captain Saulsby. It was indeed Johann, trembling, breathless, sobbing, his face like chalk and his eyes burning.

"Captain Saulsby," he cried, then stumbling, dropped on his knees in the sand. He clung to the old man's coat crying out again and again, "I will not go, I will not go."

In a moment of quiet they heard the oars dipping again as the boat followed him in shore.

"Don't let them take me away," cried Johann wildly. They all stared at each other and at the vague shape moving toward them through the dark. What was to be done?

It was Billy who, in that extremity, had a sudden inspiration. He had trodden on the Captain's match box in the sand and had perhaps caught his idea from that. In a second he had run to the nearest heap of driftwood, had struck a match and kindled a little struggling flame.

"Quick, Sally," he directed, "take these and

those papers, go light the other piles down toward the point. They won't dare land where it is light."

He blew upon the blaze until the sparks flew and the rapid flame ran through the dry fuel. Higher and higher the red beacon arose, until it shone out over the water and showed the boat, slowly backing away into the dark to seek another landing place. Billy ran to another driftwood heap, glancing over his shoulder to see that Sally had successfully started hers and was hastening on to kindle others. The whole beach was lit by the red glare, the crests of the little waves caught and reflected the glow as they came running in, while, with the lighted circle spreading farther and farther out over the water, the boat drew back more and more to keep in the sheltering darkness. Johann Happs' tall figure and Captain Saulsby's huge, bent one looked gigantic against the crimson light, with their moving shadows trailing down to the water's edge.

The services were over in the little church, and the congregation, seeing the line of flame along the shore, came trooping down to see what it could mean. Once having caught an

idea of the situation, every one went to work to give assistance. The guardian fires spread farther and farther—all around the harbour, across the point and beyond the mill-stream cove. Children ran to and fro like ants, gathering fuel; the crackling driftwood burned blue and green and golden, lifting high flames to signal defiance to the enemy.

Scorched, smoke-begrimed, weary with toil and excitement, Billy and Sally Shute at last made their way back to where Johann and Captain Saulsby were still talking. A little group had gathered about them, but of these Johann scarcely seemed aware, so intent was he upon what he was saying.

"And they keep telling me always that I must work for the Fatherland here, or go back to aid her at home," he was saying as Billy came close. "But I answered that this was my Fatherland and I had no other. Yet they keep repeating that a man can have but one, and if it is once Germany so must it always be Germany."

"But you were born here," said the old sailor, "and your father was banished from his own country."

"Yes, he was driven out, but he longed al-

ways to return, perhaps because he knew he never could. He wished that I should go back there to live after he died; I did go, but it was only for a year."

"Didn't you like it, Joe?" asked one of the fishermen lightly.

Johann regarded him with solemn, earnest eyes.

"I thought at first I would like it," he answered. "The order appealed to me, and the lack of waste and the doing everything so well. But in a little I saw that it was too well done, too perfect. Does Nature never waste? Did the dear Gott make us perfect? No, but they try to think they can make you so in Germany." He was silent a moment, then his last words broke from him almost with a cry. "To be perfect you must be a thing—not a man. And in Germany they would make you a thing, they would break your heart, they would trample on your soul!"

"And they have been over here trying to get you to help them?" the old Captain questioned gently.

"Yes, they keep saying do this, or do that; it is for the Fatherland. 'That lighthouse, should an accident happen there and some of

the ships go on the rocks, it will be so many less against the Fatherland.' Or, 'That wireless station at Rockford, it is working to our harm; help to destroy it for the Fatherland.' I sunk my boat that they might no longer try to send me on their errands. I have tried to flee from Appledore, but I could not go, there are my little house and my good friends here, and the wide blue sea that I love so much. Then at last it came to their saying that if I have not the spirit to help them here I must go back and fight for Germany. I thought and thought, night and day I had nothing else in my unhappy mind, and at last, partly because I thought it was my duty, partly because I was afraid, I said I would go."

Billy looked at Johann and thought of those mild blue eyes of his being ordered to look with approval on the sights of this most terrible of wars, thought of his gentle, capable hands being set to the burning and pillaging of stricken Belgium. He shuddered.

"I believed they had bruised my spirit until there was no more life in it," Johann went on, "but when they came for me tonight, when we passed the point and I saw the lights of Captain Saulsby's cottage, when I thought of fight-

ing against his country and that of all the friends I loved, why then I could not go. I jumped overboard and swam ashore; this little girl's brave voice showed me the way; this boy's quick wit prevented my enemies from following me, and here I am."

So absorbed had Billy been, that it was not until Sally nudged him, that he observed the last addition to Johann's group of listeners. Then he saw a little, bedraggled man, hatless and blackened with the charcoal of the fires they had been tending. He did not realize who it was until the men about them parted, leaving the newcomer face to face with Captain Saulsby.

"Harvey Jarreth," the old sailor said, "are you still trying to pass yourself off as a fit companion for honest men? That friend of yours is out there on the yacht; this boy Johann is too good to go with him, but you are not. You had better join them out there, Harvey; there is nothing left here for you. No one will ever trust or respect you again; you will probably be in jail in another hour if you stay. There are plenty of men here will offer you a boat, just to get rid of you. You had better go to your friends, Harvey."

Jarreth received the Captain's words in unprotesting silence. He seemed to be thinking very deeply, and of unhappy things, but when he spoke at last it was with a queer twisted smile.

"I don't believe I'll go, Ned," he answered, "no matter what comes to me here. I am certainly the biggest fool in the United States, and perhaps the biggest rascal; but after all I am in the United States and I think I will stay there. He has gone beyond anything I ever bargained for, that friend of mine; he has made a monkey of me just the way you said, and I am glad to know it at last. Yes, I guess I will stay. I would rather go to jail than to Germany."

He pulled a roll of papers out of his pocket, turned them over once or twice and then tore them across.

"I always said it was criminal, the way you looked after your affairs, Ned Saulsby," he went on, "and I had got a clear title to most of your land; these were the proofs." He tossed the torn papers into the nearest fire where they burst into flame.

"I'd kind of like to go to jail," he concluded at last, with a tremor in his once arrogant

voice. "I believe it would make me feel better about having been such a fool. Tell any one who wants me that I'll be waiting at my house."

Without another word he turned in the flickering firelight, and trudged slowly away through the heavy sand.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST VOYAGE OF JOHANN HAPPS

THERE was a story, one which Billy had often heard Captain Saulsby tell, of a ship that had driven on the rocks outside the harbour of Appledore during one of the terrible winter tempests. No boat could hope to reach her, so gigantic were the seas, and the crew had clung in her rigging all night, waiting for the wind to fall and help to come. The fisherfolk of the village had gathered on the shore, had built fires to signal to the desperate sailors that friends were watching and ready to give aid, and had tended their beacons all night long, so that some spark of hope might still live in the hearts of the drowning men. When morning broke and the wind went down, they were all rescued, "seventeen men and the ship's cat."

Appledore saw a similar scene tonight, with the long red line of signal fires blazing the length of the beach, and with every man and

woman toiling to keep them burning. Yet it was not to friends they were signalling this time, but foes; to a lurking, treacherous enemy whose one safety lay in secrecy and darkness, and who read the message of defiance and drew off silently into the night.

Hour after hour passed, the wind rose higher and higher, sweeping great clouds of smoke and sparks along the beach. The tide came in and the seas rose, until even the harbour became a circle of tossing waves and thundering breakers.

"They'll not be trying to send any boats ashore now," one of the fishermen said to Captain Saulsby. "I think Joe Happs is safe enough from any danger of their coming after him."

The Captain nodded gravely as he sat there on the sand.

"I believe you can let the fires go out," he said, "and you have surely done a good deed for Johann this night. He would thank you if he could, but it is pretty plain that just now he can't. I wonder what he is going to do."

The people went away homeward one by one, the fires burned down to heaps of blazing coals, the surf came roaring in, higher and

higher as the wind and tide rose together, and the call of Appledore sounded deep and loud through all the growing tumult. Long ago Sally Shute had been dragged away to her bed, protesting loudly, but led by a determined mother, Johann Happs had wandered aimlessly off in the direction of his little house, so that only Billy and Captain Saulsby were left still sitting on the sand. The old man could not be persuaded to go home, nor would Billy leave him. After some time Johann reappeared again, coming silently out of the dark and seating himself beside them without a word. The three said very little for a time, as the Captain's thoughts seemed to be busy with the past, Johann's to be bent on the problem of his future, while Billy's whirling wits were trying to cope with the present. Where was the yacht? What was she doing? Were German eyes still fixed upon their fires in the dark? Would morning bring some bigger adventure, or would it show an empty harbour and that victory was with the watchers of Appledore?

The night wore past, the blackness faded to grey, by slow, slow creeping hours the morning came. Captain Saulsby seemed to know

just the moment when it was light enough for observation, for he pulled the glasses from his pocket, adjusted them, and looked long and earnestly out to sea. Then he handed them to Billy.

"Sight straight across the point," he directed, "above that scrub pine. What do you make of it?"

Billy looked and gave an unrestrained shout of joy. Within the dancing field of the glasses he could see the big, white yacht plunging through the heavy seas, while on either side and just ahead of her three dark vessels were swiftly drawing in.

"I wondered why they were so slow there at the Naval Station when I sent my message," remarked the Captain. "I see now that they were taking no chances, but were seeing to it the yacht was headed off this time. Hark!"

The wind had shifted and was blowing hard in shore. It carried to them a faint sound—"boom," and then again—"boom."

"They are firing on her," shouted Billy, dancing up and down with excitement. Johann had the glasses now, and was looking through them intently.

"She is lying to," he said quietly at last. "She sees she can't make it."

"No? Give me that glass." Captain Saulsby fairly snatched it out of his hand. "Well, it's true," he went on after watching the vessels for a moment. "She hasn't even the spirit to get herself respectably sunk. They'll bring her into port, I suppose, and put the whole lot in jail. Harvey Jarreth will be glad to see them."

He got up slowly and stiffly.

"I guess the show is over," he said, "and I, for one, begin to remember that there is such a thing in the world as sleep. We ought all of us to turn in. Johann Happs, you look like a ghost, man; you should be taking some rest. When those rascals are brought up in court, the authorities will be needing your evidence. You must get yourself pulled together somehow."

"Yes—yes, I will go home at once."

Billy thought that Johann seemed to be paying very little attention even to his own words, but he said nothing. He was weary himself, yet still too excited to feel sleepy. Johann left them at Captain Saulsby's door, but Billy

went inside and remained to help the old man prepare a breakfast of bacon and coffee, which tasted most delicious and was badly needed by both of them.

It was still very early, with the sun only just coming up when he started homeward. He had borrowed the binoculars and went first down to the point, hoping to have another view of the captured yacht. The wind was blowing fiercer and fiercer, and the spray dashing up in columns between the rocks. The yacht and two of her captors had disappeared, it was plain that they had made for some port other than Rockford. The third ship, however, was headed in his direction, probably planning to make for Rockford or possibly Piscataqua. She passed so close that Billy could see, through the glass, as plainly as though he were alongside, her wave-swept deck, her weary wind-buffeted crew, even the worn faces of the officers on her bridge.

They had had a night of it, just as he had, but he was going to rest and to recover himself in peace and ease, while they had probably another day and night of just such toil and watching before them, and another, and another. That was what war was! No gather-

ing of great fleets for battle, no spectacular deeds of glory, no frequent chances for the winning of undying fame. It was to be hard work, unwearying vigilance, dull days of patrolling and long, long nights of watching. So America was to be guarded, so her Allies were to be given aid. It would take many men to do it, and each last one must bear his full part. He went back along the point and up the beach path, thinking deeply.

What was his surprise on seeing Johann Happs again; he who should have been at home sleeping was, instead, hurrying toward the wharf with a bundle under his arm. When Billy called to him he did not stop, merely hastened on the faster. Finally, however, Billy's flying feet overtook him, the boy's hand was laid upon his arm and he was forced to turn about.

"Oh, it's you!" he exclaimed in evident relief, "I thought it might be some one else." He fumbled in his pocket. "The hotel clerk had this message for you; I told him I would deliver it and had almost forgotten all about it."

He drew out an envelope and handed it to Billy. It was a cablegram, the answer to the

dispatch he had sent to his father the morning before. He held the paper with difficulty in the wind and finally managed to read its contents.

"Give consent reluctantly," it ran.

When he had cabled he had thought of enlisting only as a distant possibility, now, with the permission in his hand, with the vivid impression still in his mind of what the naval service stood for, he felt the desire surge up within him to enlist now, without a moment's delay.

"Father may cable again to say I can't," he reflected as he stood there, buffeted by the wind. "They are so far away, he and mother might not understand how things really are. If I can send a message saying I have applied, before they can send word to me again, that I know would settle it. It would take months to get my father's signature to the papers giving consent, but he could cable authority to some one to sign for him. The great thing is to hurry."

Where was the nearest recruiting office, he began to wonder. Certainly not on Appledore Island, no, nor even at Rockford. The nearest was at Piscataqua and—wait, what was

it they had told him there? That the number was nearly full and that probably the place would be closed in a day or two. In that case he might have to go to Boston; there would be delay, it might be too late.

"Johann," he asked, suddenly coming down to earth and calling to his companion who had begun to move off down to the wharf, "Johann, where are you going?"

"I am going over to the mainland," returned Johann, turning around and bending backward against the wind that caught him with full force where he stood.

"Then wait," said Billy; "I am going with you. When does the boat start?"

"She is not going out today, the wind is too bad," was the reply. "I have just been to ask her captain."

Then how are you going?" asked Billy, "and, Johann—why do you go?"

The lad looked down, shuffled his feet uneasily and seemed at a loss for an answer.

"And when are you coming back?" Billy pursued. "Tell me, I must know."

"I am never coming back," Johann broke forth with sudden vehemence. "Do you not see, can you not understand? Those Germans

they are bringing in will be tried and I will have to testify. Every one will hear of it, will know how Johann Happs, of Appledore, let them tempt him, let them try to drive him, nearly let them carry him away to fight for Germany. Will any person ever trust me again, think you? When I wish to serve my country, my *own* country, and offer myself, will they not say, 'Ah, you are Johann Happs; no, no, we take no such men as you.' So I am going away to lose myself, to change my name, to be an American with no memory of what my father was. Those men who are to be tried will be convicted anyway. Harvey Jarreth, Captain Saulsby, you, can all give evidence enough for that. There will be no need for Johann Happs, so he is going to vanish forever."

"I could stop you," said Billy slowly. "I ought to stop you. Do you think I ought to, Johann?"

"I have been weak and a coward," the other replied, "but somehow in this night I have learned to be a man. Would you rob me of my chance to prove it? Will you not believe in me and let me go?"

Billy thought harder for a moment than he had ever thought in his life before.

"Yes, I believe in you," he said at last. "And if you are going I am going too. But how will we cross?"

"I have arranged with Sanderson to let me have his boat," returned Johann. "I own a half interest, so if I sink her I will not be doing wrong. But you should not go with me." He looked at the storm-tossed harbour and the angry sea outside. "No," he finished mildly, "it would not be wise."

"If you can, I can," was Billy's decree. "Wait two seconds while I get my things."

He dashed wildly up to the hotel and was back again almost before Johann had loosed the dory that was to carry them out to Sanderson's boat. The rocking and pitching were so great that it was difficult to embark, but Johann had managed it and Billy was just preparing to follow, when a firm hand took him by the arm.

"What are you two boys doing, starting a suicide club?" growled Captain Saulsby's voice in his ear.

Billy turned quickly.

"You can't keep us," he exclaimed desperately; "you needn't try."

"I'll hear first where you are going, thank you," returned the Captain, "though to be going anywhere with such a wind coming, is rank lunacy."

As briefly and as earnestly as he could, Billy explained their respective errands and the need of both of them for haste. More than once he had to shout to make himself heard above wind and water.

"I've *got* to enlist," he ended; "to delay now may mean waiting months. And it takes a long time to train a good sailor; I must begin now! I *must!* And you need not say anything, because we are both bound to go."

"Well, I'm not saying anything, am I?" the old sailor answered. Then he bent forward and spoke close to Billy's ear to make absolutely certain of being heard. "I wouldn't stop any one's going into the Navy, surely not at a time like this. But if you go in at the bottom, remember the mistake I made and, for all you are worth, aim at the top. And when you get to be something big, that every one salutes and says 'sir' to, why, you might



"Would you believe it, there were two boys that put to sea right in the face of it?"

remember once in a while that it was old Ned Saulsby of Appledore Island that launched you. That is all, only—only—God bless you."

He actually took Billy's arm and pushed him toward the boat. "There is no one but Johann Happs would stand a chance of getting across in the face of such a storm," he added, "but I believe he can make it. I will explain to your Aunt. Now drop in the tender, and I will push you off."

People tell on Appledore Island today, and will tell for many a year to come, of the great storm of April, nineteen seventeen. They will show you just how far up the shore the waves broke at high tide; they will tell you the maximum velocity of the wind, and will point out the broken wreckage of two fishing boats that dragged their anchors and were thrown upon the beach. And they will always end by saying—

"And would you believe it, there were two boys that put out to sea right in the face of it? Boys, mind you, and one of them not born and bred to sailing a boat. A little craft, they had, too; Sanderson's *Echo;* you can see her at anchor over yonder by the wharf."

Only the utter recklessness of two headlong boys could have conceived such an expedition; only the almost uncanny skill of one and the blind obedience of the other could ever have carried it through. Billy, who did not yet know all that there was to be learned of sailing, could still realize that never had he seen a boat handled as was the little *Echo* with Johann Happs at the helm. He himself made a better assistant than he had on the day when he and Captain Saulsby capsized; he knew what to do when he could help, and how to keep out of the way when he could not.

The harbour of Appledore faced the open sea, so that it seemed more than once that the furious wind must blow them back upon the beach or dash them against the rocks as they sought to clear the point. Then they were past it at last, and flying before the wind toward the distant shore. Billy had one last glimpse of the Island as they rose on the crest of a wave, then a curtain of rain descended and blotted it from his sight. Yet even above the wind he could hear the strange, deep humming voice of Appledore calling aloud to speed them on their way.

"This wind is nothing to what is coming," Johann shouted.

Except for this remark and for the orders he issued from time to time, he scarcely spoke throughout their long and perilous voyage. White-faced, determined, with eyes that seemed to be seeing far visions, rather than the hungry seas about him, he stood at the tiller and, by main strength of will it seemed, drove the little boat upon her course. To Billy it appeared that at any moment one of the vast, green mountains of water that ran beside, must sweep in upon them with its overwhelming flood, but always the boat lifted just in time and slipped over the crests in safety.

He crouched in the bottom, drenched, shivering, blinded by the flying spray, thinking of nothing but Johann's next order and whether he could carry it out. Dimly he realized that the wind shrieked ever louder through the rigging, that the great waves were becoming greater, that the squalls of rain were sharper and more frequent. Yet he never doubted the outcome; he felt certain that Johann's skill would not fail them, that the wind might roar as it pleased, and the

threatening waves rise as high as they willed, that it all would bring them only the more swiftly to the desired haven.

There was no way of telling how long their voyage lasted. Sometimes it seemed to Billy that it was only a few minutes since they had set out, and he strained his ears to hear if Appledore were calling still. Sometimes it seemed that they had been sailing for days and that they must go on forever, soaked, dazed, worn out to the utmost, but determined still.

A dim grey shape loomed up through the rain at their right hand.

"Andrew's Point," announced Johann tersely. Billy felt an almost imperceptible change, the wind struck them a shade less fiercely, the seas were not so heavy, their speed began to slacken. Johann spoke suddenly once more as a dark line showed vaguely before them.

"That's Rockford breakwater," he said. "We're nearly in." Then—"Here, take her, Billy; I'm done!"

He collapsed all at once, sinking to his knees, yet managing somehow to steady the tiller until Billy's hand fell upon it. Then, with a queer, gentle sigh, he dropped upon

his face and lay inert, thrown to and fro as the boat pitched, while the water they had shipped washed back and forth over him. Billy could do nothing to aid him, for all his attention and all of his strength were needed to handle the plunging boat. How had Johann ever stood it so long he wondered, out there in the gale where it seemed, now, that it was only by a miracle they had lived at all? Could he manage to round the breakwater unassisted? He felt that he could not possibly do it, but that he must.

It was accomplished at last and they were in nearly quiet water, speeding toward the wharf. Three members of the Life-Saving Crew, who had been watching from the pier, came rowing out to meet them and showed Billy where he could pick up a mooring and make the *Echo* fast.

"I thought it was boys!" ejaculated one when first they came alongside. "There's no grown man would be fool enough to cross over from Appledore Island in such weather, and you didn't get in one second too soon. The way the wind is now off Andrew's Point, no boat like yours could last five minutes."

They lifted Johann into their dory and brought the two boys ashore.

"He'll be all right in a bit when he's got dry and warm again," said one of the men, "and as for you, young skipper, you are not in a much better state yourself."

"I'm not the skipper," explained Billy quickly. "It was he that sailed her all the way over, and only gave out when we got to the breakwater. I don't think any one else on earth could have put us across. If you will take care of him a little I will be so thankful. I have to go on."

"In that state?" the man exclaimed, but Billy could not be persuaded to wait. His water-soaked watch had stopped, but a clock in one of Rockford's steeples was striking the hour.

"I can only just make the Piscataqua train," he said. "Telephone back to Appledore, won't you please, that we are safe. No, don't stop me, I have to go."

Johann had opened his eyes and now managed to hold out a wet hand to say farewell.

"You'll never see Johann Happs again," he whispered weakly, but even under his breath the tone was joyous. He was to live to forget

his weakness and his mistakes, Billy knew, and, under some other name, to become a firm and loyal American.

It was not until he had climbed aboard the jerky, bumpy little train, that he realized what a plight he was in. Water dripped from his clothes and splashed in his shoes, his hair was wet, he had lost his hat. There were not many passengers on the Piscataqua accommodation, but what few there were stared at him unceasingly and discussed him in whispers through the whole period of the journey.

Every farmhouse, every crossroads, seemed to be a stopping place for this especial train; precious minutes were wasted that began to grow into precious hours.

"Suppose the recruiting place is closed," he kept thinking. "Suppose they are closing it now! Suppose the last man they need is just applying and the officer in charge is saying, 'Shut the doors!' "

They bumped to a stop at Clifford's Junction, three miles from Piscataqua and waited ten minutes—fifteen—twenty.

"How long is this going to last?" Billy finally appealed to the brakeman.

"We've got to wait here for the Boston

train and she's an hour late," was the easy reply. "Don't fuss, young man, she'll be along by and by."

"I'll walk," returned Billy, and flung himself down the steps.

There was no town at the Junction, no place where a conveyance was to be had, so walk Billy did. The road was rough and rutty, it seemed eternally climbing up hills and never going down them; the distance seemed thirty miles instead of three. The rain clouds cleared and the sun came out, hot and steaming, to beat mercilessly upon his uncovered head. His shoes were heavy and stiff from their salt-water soaking, there was salt, too, in his hair, his eyes and in his parched throat. He stumbled on, knowing vaguely from the shortening shadows that it was nearly noon, that the time was flying and that even now it might be too late.

He began to pass small houses, he crossed the bridge that spanned Piscataqua's tide-river, he came into the town itself. He threaded his way up and down several narrow, crooked streets until he came out at last upon a broader one, with a feeling that he had seen it before. Yes, there ahead of him was the

recruiting station, he could not mistake it. His head was swimming with heat and weariness, he could hardly lift his feet; people stopped and looked strangely at him, but he pressed on. The flag was still flying, a bluejacket was standing on the step, the door was open, he was in time.

The sailor held out a hand to help him as he stumbled over the threshold, but Billy shook it off. What he was about to do he was going to do alone. Inside a uniformed officer was sitting behind a desk; he, too, looked up anxiously as he caught a glimpse of the boy's exhausted face, and half rose to aid him. Mutely Billy shook his head; he did not want assistance. He held to the back of a chair and stood up very stiff and straight before the desk.

His throat was queer and sticky and his lips so dry that at first he could not speak. When at last the words came, they sounded strange in his own ears, even though he had rehearsed them a hundred times as he came along the road.

"I want to enlist in the Navy," he said.

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